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## RUSSIAN STUDIES



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HUMANISTISK SERIE 43  
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# RUSSIAN STUDIES

BY

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## PREFACE

The idea of preparing these studies dates back to 1949-1950, when I acted as visiting professor at Columbia University, New York. Professor ERNEST J. SIMMONS, the indefatigable head of the *Department of Slavic Languages* and editor of its series, the *Columbia Slavic Studies*, was then planning a collective work on *The Peoples and Languages of the Soviet Union*. He invited me to write the Russian section, and I accepted his suggestion with the greatest pleasure. The result of my work is found in the following pages.

It is not the purpose of my *Russian Studies* to provide a handbook in Russian history and literature; accordingly, the reader will not find any treatment of the so to speak official side of the history of the Russian state or of Russian literature. On the contrary, the main object was rather to give a more or less detailed picture of the cultural development in the great bulk of the East Slavic or Russian people through the centuries, its inofficial cultural history. It seemed to me expedient to give the reader, in the first two chapters, an idea of the purely statistical and geographical distribution and development of the East Slavic (Great Russian, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian) people, as well as of its historical and dialectal differentiation. It also seemed natural in this connection to try to throw some light on the origin of the ethnic national names connected with the three great branches of the East Slavic population (chapter 3).

And thus the foundation had been laid for a discussion of the spiritual life of the great masses of the nation, as it found expression in Russian paganism, Russian Christianity, and Russian oral poetry. These aspects are dealt with in chapters 4, 5, and 6. It is only natural that the peasant population should appear in these studies as the bearer of national ideas and poetic trends. The brief outline of Russian peasant history (chapter 7) consequently forms the basis for a discussion of peasant mentality and its development as conditioned by changing historical and social circumstances (chapter 8). Many other and more concrete problems might of course have been treated here, but I should like to stress that the *abstract* lines of development were the ones I wished to emphasize in these studies.

I take this opportunity to thank my friend Professor Ernest J. Simmons for the interest with which he has followed my work from the very beginning to the printing stage. My thanks are also due to the Rockefeller Foundation for the support I have received through the *Department of Slavic Languages* while preparing these studies, and to Miss Elizabeth Bagger Rasmussen, Cand. mag., for the careful translation of the Danish manuscript.

Ad. Stender-Petersen.

Received from the author



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## Chapter I.

# THE RUSSIAN POPULATION

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### 1.

In every description of the peoples living in the Soviet Union and the languages spoken in that country it is useful, and indeed necessary, to stress the fact that the Soviet Union is not – in the sense of most other modern states – a national state. It is true that among the many nations constituting the Soviet Union, one, viz. the Russian, plays an exceedingly dominant part in many respects as compared with the others. And this is even more true in the case of the Russian language. This may be the reason why the Soviet Union is frequently referred to as *Soviet Russia*. Ever since it came into existence, however, the Soviet Union has rested on the so-called *Declaration of the Rights of the Nations* of November 15th, 1917. Constitutionally it should therefore be regarded as a federation of juridically equal states, each corresponding with one clearly defined nationality, yet in some cases comprising minorities of other nationalities at a less developed stage of self-government.

On this point there is an essential difference between Tsar-time Russia and the Soviet Union. In a speech made immediately after the October Revolution Lenin maintained that in old Russia the purely Russian population had constituted no more than 40 per cent of the total population, whereas the rest of the inhabitants – including, it seems, the Ukrainian and Byelorussian nations – represented a

majority of 60 per cent.<sup>1</sup> It does not appear from Lenin's speech from what source he had this information.<sup>2</sup> But even if the figures given should be slightly exaggerated, they can hardly deviate much from the actual conditions. According to the first and only census taken in conformance to the principles of modern statistics during the Tsar era (1897), the population of Russia totalled 125,680,683, while the strictly Russian (Great Russian) element numbered 55,667,469,<sup>3</sup> that is to say 44.3 per cent. Considering a certain tendency in non-Russians to term themselves Russians, this figure should probably be regarded as too high rather than too low. Most non-Russian peoples (with the exception of Ukrainians and Byelorussians) were in legal terminology even styled *inorodcy* (people of foreign origin) or, if belonging to creeds other than the Orthodox, *inovery* (people of foreign faith), and so became foreigners in their own country. Thus it will be seen that in matters of law as well as of religion the Russians occupied a quite remarkably privileged position during the Tsar regime. If to-day they still play a leading and decisive part in the Soviet Union it is not for legal or religious reasons, but for reasons of a very different nature. Most important among them may be the fact that they represent the highest degree of culture, technical and scientific, in the newly established union of widely different peoples. Incidentally, there is no national, racial, or other discrimination – in the legal sense of the word – between these nations.

The present studies on Slavic languages and peoples in the Soviet Union will only concern itself with those belonging to the so-called *East Slavic* or *Russian* group. This group consists of Russians, or Great Russians, Ukrainians, occasionally called Little Russians, and Byelorussians, sometimes misnamed White Russians. From a linguistical point of view these three nations are closely related. There are, admittedly, certain other national elements in the Soviet Union of to-day, belonging to the so-called *West* and *South Slavic* groups, but their numbers are so small that they may be left completely out of this description. The elements in question are Poles (ab. 782,000 according to the 1926 census),<sup>4</sup> Czechs and Slovaks (ab. 27,000 in 1926),<sup>5</sup> and finally Bulgarians (ab. 111,000).<sup>6</sup> They do not form compact groups of population, nor are they concentrated in autonomous states.

In the attempt to establish the exact figures for the East Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian) groups of languages, one meets with great difficulties. As no reliable up-to-date sources have been made accessible, one is forced to turn to figures of partly uncertain provenience or to theoretical computation. During the 30 odd years during which the Soviet Union has been in existence a census has been taken no less than 4 times, viz. in 1920, 1926, 1937, and 1939. The first

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Sočinenija*, 2nd ed., Vol. XXII, 1935, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin's statement is reproduced in H.A. Freund, *Russia from A to Z*, Sydney-London 1945, p. 390.

<sup>3</sup> Richter, p. I and XIII.

<sup>4</sup> Lorimer, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

one, however, was naturally most unsatisfactory, being undertaken at a time when conditions in the country were as yet far from stabilized. As will be known the establishment of the Soviet Union was only proclaimed in December 1922, and its first constitution was not passed till 1924. The most reliable census covering the entire Soviet Union took place on December 17th, 1926, but although it has been called "one of the most complete accounts ever presented of the population of any country",<sup>7</sup> its results will of course no longer cover actual conditions. It is a well-known fact that the third census, taken on January 6th, 1937, was annulled six months later (September 26th, 1937), the results being considered unreliable. The results of the fourth, and last, census which took place on January 17th, 1939, have to a certain extent been made public and are thus open to research. They have been characterized as "a second reliable bench mark", but the publication of the complete results was unfortunately interrupted by the Second World War, and it is therefore hardly possible to avoid "devious and often doubtful interpolations and inferences".<sup>8</sup>

Through the increase of territory and population which was caused by the events of 1940, the problem of the distribution of nationalities in the Soviet Union was still further obscured. Up to 1940 the Soviet Union had consisted of 11 national republics of equal status. According to the so-called *Stalin Constitution* they were: (1) the Russian, (2) the Ukrainian, (3) the Byelorussian, (4) the Turkmen, (5) the Uzbek, (6) the Tajik, (7) the Kazakh, (8) the Kirghiz, (9) the Georgian, (10) the Azerbaijan, and (11) the Armenian. As a result of the events in 1940, however, 5 new national republics were added, which made the total number 16. Two of them, the so-called Karelo-Finnish Republic and the so-called Moldavian Republic, – republics of secondary status under the Russian and the Ukrainian Republics respectively, – were now united with new districts and elevated to national republics of full status. Karelia, formerly a republic in Russia (established in July 25th, 1923), was now segregated from the Russian National Republic and united with the territory ceded by Finland. Similarly, the Moldavian Republic (of October 11th, 1924) was separated from the Ukraine and conjoined with Bessarabia, ceded by Rumania and long a bone of contention between Rumania and the Soviet Union. The other three new national republics were the formerly independent Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which on June 17th, 1940, were occupied by Soviet troops. On August 5th and 6th, 1940, they were incorporated in the great number of already existing Soviet National Republics. In consequence of this, as well as of the incorporation of Bukovina and the Eastern Polish provinces in the Ukraine and Byelorussia respectively, the Soviet Union had a certain increase of Slavic-speaking groups (mostly Ukrainians and Byelorussians). The exact increase is, however, difficult to estimate. From Soviet sources it appears that in Estonia and Latvia there lived Russian- (Great Russian)-speaking minori-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, Preface, p. XIII. – Cf. Pisarev, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.



ties of 7.3 and 12 per cent respectively.<sup>9</sup> As the total populations of these countries are supposed to have numbered 1.120.000 and 1.950.000 respectively, the Russian element in these states must have amounted to about 80.000 and 234.000 respectively, altogether about 314.000. These figures do indeed seem surprisingly high. It should be noted, however, that whereas the Russian percentage of the Latvian population has been computed on the basis of information from the year 1936, that is to say before the country was incorporated in the Soviet Union, the percentage in the case of Estonia is based on figures from 1941, at which time a certain immigration of Russians may well have taken place. In the formerly autonomous republic of Karelia, before it was re-established as the Karelo-Finnish National Republic, the Russian-speaking population is supposed to have amounted to more than one half, viz. no less than 63 per cent.<sup>10</sup> This may be the reason why in 1956 Karelia was re-incorporated in the Russian republic. The Ukrainian and the Byelorussian National Republics were considerably augmented through the incorporation of the former Polish Eastern Galicia, Northern Bukovina, Carpatho-Russia, and the eastern provinces of Poland to the east of the well-known Curzon Line.

## 2.

Out of the 15 national Soviet republics now constituting the Soviet Union, only 3 may be regarded as states based on Russian (East Slavic) nationalities. And yet not even these 3 republics, the Russian, the Ukrainian, and the Byelorussian, are pure national states. In the Russian republic the state of affairs is especially complicated. As indicated by the name, the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic includes elements other than purely Russian in such compact masses that it has been necessary to establish a large number of secondary national republics within its boundaries. The Russian contingent in the Russian Federated Republic has been estimated at 73 per cent in 1926,<sup>11</sup> 73.4 per cent in 1933,<sup>12</sup> and about 75 per cent at the present time.<sup>13</sup> In 1933 only 80 per cent of the population in the Ukrainian Republic were real Ukrainians, and in Byelorussia only 80.6 per cent were real Byelorussians.<sup>14</sup> At the same time there was a purely Russian element of 9.2 per cent in the Ukraine and one of 7.2 per cent in Byelorussia.<sup>15</sup> Almost 8 million Ukrainians are assumed to have been living outside the Ukraine in 1926. In the same year 700.000 Byelorussians were living outside their national republic.<sup>16</sup>

As regards the total number of Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians, it remains a fact that according to the 1926 census there were about 78 million Rus-

<sup>9</sup> Davydov, col. 62, table IX.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Lorimer, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> Davydov, col. 62, table IX.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 60-61.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 62, table IX.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Lorimer, p. 50.

sians, about 31 million Ukrainians, and just under 5 million Byelorussians.<sup>17</sup> In the 1939 census, however, it appears that there were upwards of 99 million Russians, just over 28 million Ukrainians, and about 5.3 million Byelorussians.<sup>18</sup> Taken together with the total populations in these two years, 147 millions in 1926 and 170 millions in 1939, the figures given above indicate that the Russian contingent had risen from 52.9 per cent to 58.41 per cent, that the Ukrainian contingent had fallen from 21.21 per cent to 16.56 per cent, and that the Byelorussian contingent had remained almost unchanged (3.22 and 3.11 per cent respectively). From Soviet sources<sup>19</sup> it appears, however, that in consequence of the recent territorial enlargements in the west, the total number of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union was estimated at no less than 36.5 millions, the corresponding estimate for the Byelorussians being 8.7 millions. Taken together with the total population of the Soviet Union as given in the 1939 census, these estimates would mean a new rise to 20.82 (still lower than in 1939) and 5.1 per cent respectively. These figures leave no possible doubt of the violent disturbances to which the Ukrainian people must have been subjected during the 1926-39 period, the period of collectivization, deportation, and starvation, while the two other nations remained more or less unaffected by the events which caused the decrease of the Ukrainian population. They also illustrate very clearly the enormous increase of national resources brought about in the Ukraine and Byelorussia by the dismemberment of Poland and the incorporation of Carpatho-Russia, formerly a part of Czechoslovakia. If, however, we fix the total population of the Soviet Union in 1940 at 193 millions (not counting the national increase during the years 1939-40),<sup>20</sup> the Russian, Ukrainian, and Byelorussian percentages of this total will be 51.3, 18.88, and 4.5.

Though the Russian Republic itself is divided into a number of secondary federated national republics on a lower level, it does not follow that the Russians are of no importance in those republics. On the contrary, in some of these secondary republics the Russian percentage is actually so high as to suggest that the Russians play the leading role. In most non-Russian national republics of this category the population is more or less mixed with Russians. In some the Russians make up half of the total population, varying between 40 and 60 per cent. The strongest concentration of Russians is found in the Mordvinian Republic, the most westerly of the autonomous republics along the Volga river. Here they amount to 57.3 per cent according to 1933 figures. In the same year they represented 43.6 per cent in the Mari Republic, but only 15.8 per cent in the Chuvash Republic, to the south of the former. In the Kazan-Tatar Republic, between the Volga river and the Ural Mountains, the Russians numbered 41.8 per cent, and in the Bashkir Republic, south of the Ural Mountains, 39.4 per cent. In the Udmurt Republic, between the towns of Vyatka and Perm, the Rus-

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 55, table 23.

<sup>18</sup> Lorimer, p. 138, table 55, - Davydov, col. 60, table VII, - Jorré, p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Davydov, col. 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 49.

sian percentage was as high as 43.3, whereas in the Zyryan or Komi Republic, in the far north, it was no more than 6.1.<sup>21</sup> Incidentally, these figures, when taken together with those of the 1926 census, indicate a falling tendency in the Russian element as compared with the indigenous populations of the national republics in question.<sup>22</sup> In Northern Caucasia the autonomous republics of Daghestan, North Ossetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria – all of them members of the Federated Russian Republic – have also very low Russian percentages, viz. 12.5, 6.6, and 10.7. In Siberia, which is populated mainly by Russians and to a certain extent also by Ukrainians, the independent autonomous republic of Yakutia had been established, covering a vast area in the far north-east. Here, also, the number of Russians is comparatively small, their percentage being 10.4. On the other hand, they actually constitute a majority in the important Buryat-Mongolian Republic round Lake Baikal in South Eastern Siberia, their percentage here being 52.7.<sup>23</sup>

These statistical data concerning the distribution and spreading of the Russian population within the Eastern European and Asiatic parts of the Federated Russian Republic illustrate the roads along which the expansion took place in the past. Starting from Western and Central Russia it moved chiefly east along a zone best suited for agriculture. Bounded to the north by the summer-wheat line and to the south by the desert line, this zone stands out very clearly on the demographic map reproduced in Lorimer's book.<sup>24</sup> In its striving for expansion the Russian population characteristically enough stopped at the Caucasian Mountains as well as at the wide Eurasian deserts. Out of the three Transcaucasian national republics, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, only the first – stretching along the western coast of the Caspian Sea and thus comparatively easy of access – can boast a Russian percentage of any significance, viz. 9.7 per cent.<sup>25</sup> In 1926 there were 3.6 per cent Russians in Georgia and only 2.2 per cent in Armenia.<sup>26</sup> However, the Russian population in Georgia seems to have grown considerably from 1926 to 1939, as Soviet sources give the percentage of 8.7.<sup>27</sup> The Eurasian steppe zone is first and foremost covered by the vast Kazakh Republic which has a Russian percentage of 19.7 (plus 13.2 per cent Ukrainians). Here we also find the smaller, far-away Kirghiz Republic with a Russian percentage of 11.7 (plus an unspecified number of Ukrainians).<sup>28</sup> Beyond this huge area are the two Transcaspian national republics of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. As they have been exceptionally well protected against any Russian immigration on a large scale, their Russian percentages are remarkably low, being only 7.5 and 5.6 respectively.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, col. 61, table VIII.

<sup>22</sup> See the figures in Lorimer, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> All the figures quoted are taken from Davydov, col. 61, table VIII.

<sup>24</sup> Lorimer, plate I.

<sup>25</sup> Davydov, col. 62, table IX.

<sup>26</sup> Lorimer quotes the figures 10, 4, and 2 per cent respectively for Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. G. Gvelesiani's article *Gruzinskaja Sovetskaja Socialističeskaja Respublika*, in *Bol'shaja Sovetskaja Enciklopedija, Sojuz Sovetskix Socialističeskix Respublik*, Moscow 1948, col. 1853.

<sup>28</sup> Davydov, col. 62, table IX.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

When attempting to form an opinion on the development, growth, and expansion of the Russian, or East Slavic, peoples in the past we meet with great difficulties. Lack of reliable material renders it difficult, or utterly impossible, to sketch even a moderately accurate picture, so there is no alternative to calculations and hypothetical speculations. No systematical census of any real value was carried through till 1897, when the first and only complete census under the Tsar regime was taken. For earlier centuries our only material consists in the so-called *revisions*, introduced by Peter the Great. The intention was not so much to form a basis for a comprehensive description of country and people, as to create a more or less reliable foundation for the government's taxation policy. For this reason no census would comprise all classes and groups of the Russian population, but only such persons as were actually liable to taxation. Thus "members of the nobility, clergy, court, and militia" were left out.<sup>30</sup> Transient (migrating and not settled) peoples were also outside the scope of these revisions, as also women and female children.<sup>31</sup> At first even independent peasants, artisans, and persons belonging to churches or monasteries were outside the census, being tax-exempt subjects. The first *revision* was initiated by the 1718 and 1719 decrees issued by Peter the Great,<sup>32</sup> but was only finished in 1727.<sup>33</sup> The decree of the second *revision* was issued in 1742 by the Empress Elizabeth's Government, but only put into practise in 1743, and the *revision* was not completed till 1756. The third *revision* took place in the years between 1761 and 1767, partly under the Empress Catherine II, the fourth between 1781 and 1787, the fifth in 1794, – the two last ones under the above mentioned Empress. The sixth and seventh *revisions* took place during the reign of the Emperor Alexander I, in 1811 and 1815, the eighth and ninth under Nicholas I, in 1833 and 1850, and the tenth under the Emperor Alexander II, between 1856 and 1859.<sup>34</sup> After the abolition of serfdom these *revisions* were discontinued, and instead we have the census of 1897.

It is quite possible to base on this material certain estimates of the population and its distribution between European and Asiatic Russia, and also to carry out a comparison between the data relating to 1724, 1859, and 1897.<sup>35</sup> But it is definitely impossible to distinguish between Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians in the total figures given for *Russian population*, as this term comprises all three national groups. According to Lorimer's estimates, the so-called *Russian population* in the years mentioned above numbered 17 millions, 58 millions, and 94 millions.<sup>36</sup> But these figures also show that the Slavic group of peoples termed *Russian population*

<sup>30</sup> Lorimer, *Appendix I*, p. 203.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*. – Cf. Pisarev, p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Miklaševskij, col. 241. – Cf. Pisarev, p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> This is "the 1724 census" mentioned by Lorimer, p. 8 and p. 203. According to Lorimer, p. 9 and p. 203, it was preceded by a "suppressed census of 1710". – Cf. Pisarev, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> Miklaševskij, col. 242. – Pisarev, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Lorimer's calculations, *Appendix I*, p. 203ff.

<sup>36</sup> According to Richter, the total number for "Russians" in 1897 was about 84 millions. I am unable to explain this discrepancy between Lorimer and Richter.

spread eastward during the 135 years between Peter the Great and 1859, and during the 163 years from his reign to 1897. In 1724 there were no Russians at all in the steppe region or in the Uzbek-Turkmenian areas, there were only 126,000 inhabitants in the Ural-Perm area, and only 274,000 in Siberia. But in 1859 there were probably already over 2 millions in Siberia, almost 1 million in the Ural-Perm area, and a little more than 2,000 inhabitants in the steppe region. In 1897 the inhabitants of Siberia and the Ural-Perm area numbered 6 millions (about 4.7 millions in Siberia and about 1.3 millions in Ural-Perm). The steppe region in the same year had only half a million, Turkestan 200,000, and Transcaucasia 250,000.<sup>37</sup>

It is very interesting, too, to study the expansion of the Russian population within the boundaries of European Russia during the interval of 135 years between Peter the Great (1724) and 1859. His empire did not include the whole of either Byelorussia or the Ukraine, nor the whole area north of the Caucasus. Making this rather limited empire our starting-point we shall find, with Lorimer,<sup>38</sup> that "the great expansion during the 135 years from 1724 to 1859 was the movement from the forest zone of Central and Northern Russia into the black soil and steppe zone of Southern Russia. The area referred to here as the New South<sup>39</sup> had only an estimated 1.6 million Russians (mostly in the Ukraine region) in 1724; but it had a Russian population of 14.5 million persons in 1859. The percentage of the total Russian population located in this area rose from about 9 per cent to 25 per cent during the interval. This percentage of the total Russian population to be found in the Old South (northern black soil districts, already well occupied by the time of Peter the Great) also increased, but at a slower rate, from 26 per cent in 1724 to 34.5 per cent in 1859. Southern Russia had been mostly wilderness in the XVIth Century; it held about 6 million Russians, plus some 2 million non-Russians, in 1724; but in 1859 it supported about 35 million Russians, or 59 per cent of the total Russian population".<sup>40</sup>

The *revisions* undertaken by Peter the Great had their explanation in technical taxation problems. Actually, they were based on experience gained during the reigns of his father and eldest brother. Between 1646 and 1648, under Tsar Alexis (1645-76), and between 1676 and 1678, under Tsar Feodor (1676-82), inventories were made of all households in the Muscovite Empire. These lists were called *knigi perepisnyje* (census books). As a matter of fact their appearance was prompted by the wish to replace the old taxation measure which was equivalent to certain lots of plowing land, with a new unit which would render persons who were

<sup>37</sup> Lorimer, p. 208, *Appendix I*, table A2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> The term "New South" means, in Lorimer's terminology, the regions to the south of Poltava and around the Azov Sea, conquered during the XVIIIth Century.

<sup>40</sup> It would most probably have been of some importance for the estimation of the Ukrainian population in the XVIIIth and XIXth Centuries if it had been possible to analyze the results of the "General Description of Little Russia" instigated by Rum'ancev in 1767 and referred to in Miklaševskij's article cit. above. Lorimer does not seem to have known of this census.

not husbandmen liable to taxation too. The old taxation unit was the foundation on which the so-called *piscovyje knigi* had been based, – a kind of tax-controller's books which had been made time and again during the XVIth Century and at the beginning of the XVIIth, the exact dates being 1538–47, 1550–80, and 1620–30. The material collected in these lists has to a certain extent been preserved and is open to research,<sup>41</sup> – though it is obvious that it can only be the basis of approximate estimates. The farther one retreats in time, the more uncertain becomes the ground. We know that the old Muscovite Grand Dukes of the XVth Century had certain partial censuses taken. These were invariably dictated by taxation purposes. We also know that under the Tatar yoke censuses were repeatedly carried through (in 1245, 1259, 1273, 1287, etc.) by Tatar emissaries who enrolled the number of households (*dom*) on special lists in widely scattered localities. This system of taxation was of Chinese origin, but corresponded very well with the Old Russian system based upon the plow (*plug*) as a unit.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately we cannot know for certain whether already in the early days of history some sort of organized census should have been taken by the Grand Dukes of Kijev.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, on a basis of most unreliable material a process of approximate calculations has been carried out, resulting in certain estimated figures which apply to intervals of 100 years, beginning with the XVth Century. These figures refer to the whole of the present European Russia irrespective of the type of population, whether purely Russian or including non-Russian elements. The year 1480 was chosen for a starting-point, as it was the year in which the Muscovite Grand Duchy under Ivan III finally shook off the Tatar yoke. For the years 1480, 1580, 1680, 1780, 1880, and the year of the first census 1897 the following figures were arrived at: 2.1 millions, 4.3 millions, 12.6 millions, 26.8 millions, 84.5 millions, and 110 millions. Unfortunately, however, these figures tell us nothing of the Slavic population as such. As for the Russian Middle Ages (covering the Xth to the XIVth Centuries) it is impossible to give even hypothetical figures.

<sup>41</sup> Mil'ukov, p. 457–459. – Pisarev, p. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the collective work *Istorija SSSR*. Vol. I, Moscow 1939, p. 175–177.

<sup>43</sup> Miklaševskij.

## Chapter 2.

# THE RISE OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLES AND THEIR LANGUAGES

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### 1.

It has proved impossible to give even approximate estimates of the Russian population in pre-Tataric centuries. Considering the large populated areas of the first Russian realm we may, however, assume that the population amounted to quite considerable numbers. The state ruled by Great Prince (or King) Jaroslav (1019-1054) was politically centred in Kiev and comprised about half of the area which later constituted European Russia.



From the earliest beginnings of Russian history the two most important cultural centers of gravity were Kiev in the south and Novgorod in the north, one of them orientated toward the steppe and the Black Sea, and the other toward the Baltic Sea, the forest zone of Northern Russia, and the White Sea. There was long a loose political connection between them, and the cultural ties were strong, but whereas Novgorod retained its independence and its republican system of government for a long time, Kiev already lost its importance in the XIIIth Century for the long period of Tatar yoke. In its flourishing times the country stretched from the Carpathians and the river Bug in the west to the middle course of the river Volga in the east, its greatest expansion being south-west to north-east. In these early centuries the vast Russian steppes were outside the Old Russian state, a playground for all kinds of nomadic tribes of Turko-Tatar origin.

During the Kievan period the whole area populated by Russians was ruled by members of the royal or princely house, believed to have descended from the legendary Rurik. Besides the Grand Duchy of Kiev, the residence of the great princes, or kings, of Russia, the country was subdivided into a great number of small, interdependent principalities. Even the semi-independent *Republic of Novgorod*, covering immense areas as far north as the northern Ural mountains, was governed by princes, who – though elected by the people of Novgorod – were always members of the same royal family. The different Old Russian principalities were linked together through a highly complicated system of succession,<sup>1</sup> which was, however, frequently violated by rebel princes and shaken by numerous feuds. We may distinguish between certain groups of mutually closer connected principalities.

A southern group consisted of the *Grand Duchy of Kiev* and a number of adjacent provinces bordering on its western, northern, and eastern sides. These principalities were the following:

(1) the *Principality of Pinsk-Turov*, named after its two principal towns and stretching along the river Pripyat, chief tributary of the Dnieper;

(2) the *Principality of Volhynia* with some important towns (Vladimir, Kremenets, Kholm), and extending between the river Bug, great eastern tributary of the Vistula, and the southern tributaries of the Pripyat;

(3) the *Principality of Galicia* with the important towns of Galich, Peremyshl, and Lvov, and extending along the two great rivers flowing south, Prut and Dniestr, down to the Danube delta;

(4) the *Principality of Pereyaslavl* beyond the Dnieper, named after its capital and stretching between the eastern Dnieper-tributaries, Seym and Vorskla;

(5) the *Principality of Seversk* on both sides of the Desna river and with the big towns of Novgorod-Seversk, Kursk, Rylsk, and Bryansk, and finally

(6) the *Principality of Chernigov*, named after its capital and forming a curve round the northern part of the above-mentioned principality.

<sup>1</sup> Platonov, p. 87 ff.



Between this southern group and the Novgorod-area was a zone of other principalities. We may call them *central principalities*. They were, from west toward east:

(1) the *Principality of Polotsk*, named after its capital and occupying the basin of the Western Dvina;

(2) the *Principality of Smolensk*, named after its capital and covering the region in which are found the riverheads of the Dvina, the Volga, and the Dnieper;

(3) the *Principality of Ryazan*, named after its most important town and stretching on either side of the river Oka, tributary of the Volga; and finally

(4) the vast *Principality of Suzdal-Rostov*, later called the *Principality of Suzdal-Vladimir*, named after its largest towns and extending on both sides of the Volga and its tributaries as far as Nizhnij-Novgorod (now Gorki). This principality later developed into the *Muscovite Tsardom*. During the XVth and XVIth Centuries it gradually incorporated the southern and western principalities as the regions in Northern Russia belonging to Novgorod.

## 2.

This rather complicated system of feudal states was very characteristic of the early centuries of the Russian State.<sup>2</sup> Behind this system, however, we can distinctly make out another, much older system,<sup>3</sup> based on the principle of tribal organization. It was apparently a system, as yet not fit to be the foundation of a political organization.

In the famous Old Russian *Nestor Chronicle*<sup>4</sup> have been preserved the names of the most important Russian tribes.<sup>5</sup> The tribe called the *Polyanians* (which is derived from the word *pole* 'field')<sup>6</sup> was undoubtedly the most highly developed among them from a cultural point of view. This was probably due to the fact that the tribe inhabited the fertile plains west of the Dnieper and south of its tributary, the Teterev, and, thus, was chiefly engaged in agriculture.<sup>7</sup> Immediately north of the Polyanians, in a wooded area south of the Pripyat, were the *Derevlyanians*<sup>8</sup> (this name is derived from *dereva* 'wood').<sup>9</sup> And north of these again, in the swampy region between the Dnieper and the Neman river systems, was a tribe called the *Dregovitchians*<sup>10</sup> (cf. Byelorussian *drehva*, Ukrainian *dr'ahovina* 'swampland').<sup>11</sup> This group – the *Polyanians*, the *Derevlyanians*, and the *Dregovit-*

<sup>2</sup> *Istoriia SSSR*, Vol. I, p. 122. – Cf. the map in Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia*, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 308ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. by D. S. Lixačov, Vol. I, Moscow-Leningrad 1950, p. 11, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the map in Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 326, or in L. Niederle, *Manuel de l'antiquité Slave*, Vol. I, p. 238.

<sup>6</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 313, and Niederle, p. 215.

<sup>7</sup> Chadwick, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Chadwick, p. 16 and Niederle, p. 215.

<sup>9</sup> Max Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1950, p. 341.

<sup>10</sup> Chadwick, p. 16, and Niederle, p. 221.

<sup>11</sup> Vasmer, p. 368.

*chians* – appear to have formed a unity, which differentiated according to the geophysical character of each region.<sup>12</sup>

The tribes extending westward called themselves *Buzhanians* (after the Vistula-tributary, Bug, along which they mainly lived),<sup>13</sup> or *Volhynians* (after the district, Volhynia, which they inhabited),<sup>14</sup> or even *Du(d)lebs*<sup>15</sup> (a name of uncertain etymology).<sup>16</sup> We do not know for certain whether the tribes were of Slavic origin which lived on both sides of the Dniester, bounded by the Southern Bug in the East, the Prut in the West, and the Black Sea and the Danube delta in the South. Their tribe names – *U(g)litchians* and *Tivertsians* – are not easily explained from Slavic etyma.<sup>17</sup> They disappeared from their settlements later on, and a theory has been advanced by Niederle<sup>18</sup> to the effect that they – providing they were Slavs – had migrated across the Carpathians and formed the nucleus of the later Carpatho-Russian or Ugro-Russian population. It seems that there was also a tribe called *Croatians* or *Khorvatians*<sup>19</sup> in what was later East Galicia, but it is not quite clear whether this was an East Slavic (Russian) tribe or the remains of a people, which had migrated to the present Croatia.

Up to this point we have only mentioned tribes living west of the Dnieper in a territory which at a later time became part of Byelorussia and the Ukraine. East of the Dnieper must first of all be mentioned the *Severians*<sup>20</sup> who lived in the region called *Sever*, probably so named because of its rough and windy climate.<sup>21</sup> Like all the tribes so far mentioned, this one belonged to the South Russian group. It had settled along the Dnieper-tributaries Desna, Seym, Sula, and Psyol, all flowing south.

A distinct northern group was found along the northern bank of the Dvina and along the rivers Velikaja and Lovat-Volkhov. This group was originally orientated toward the Baltic Sea. The largest tribe, which lived round Lake Ilmen, had kept the old ethnic name of *Slovenians*.<sup>22</sup> Their southern neighbors were called *Krivitchians* and inhabited the area in which the rivers Dvina, Dnieper, and Volga have their headwaters.<sup>23</sup> Their name (Latwian *Krēvs*, *Krēvu zeme*) was employed by the Latwians as a term designating *all* Russians or Russia.<sup>24</sup> The *Polotchians*, mentioned in the *Nestor Chronicle* as a separate tribe, were probably a branch of the same tribe,<sup>25</sup> their name being derived from the name

<sup>12</sup> Tret'jakov, p. 117.

<sup>13</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 321, and Niederle, p. 214.

<sup>14</sup> Vernadsky, *ibid.*, p. 321, and Niederle, p. 214.

<sup>15</sup> Vernadsky, *ibid.*, and Niederle.

<sup>16</sup> Vasmer, I, p. 379–80.

<sup>17</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 312, and Niederle, p. 216. – Cf. Vasmer, III, p. 103.

<sup>18</sup> Niederle, p. 218–219.

<sup>19</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 321, and Niederle, p. 213.

<sup>20</sup> Vernadsky, p. 316, and Niederle, p. 219.

<sup>21</sup> A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków 1927, p. 490.

<sup>22</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 324, and Niederle, p. 224.

<sup>23</sup> Vernadsky, *ibid.*, p. 324, Niederle, p. 225, Šaxmatov, *Očerki*, p. XXII.

<sup>24</sup> Niederle, p. 226. – Cf. Vasmer, I, p. 663.

<sup>25</sup> Niederle, *ibid.*, p. 225.

of the town Polotsk on the Dvina-tributary Polota, along whose banks they lived.<sup>26</sup>

Besides the North and South Russian groups of tribes there were two more tribes, which by some scholars are set apart as a distinct group.<sup>27</sup> In the *Nestor Chronicle* we come across the statement that these tribes were of *lyakhic* origin.<sup>28</sup> As the East Poles were often termed *Lyakhs* (*L'axy*) in earlier Russian texts, it was now concluded that these were tribes which in primeval times had broken away from the Polish people and gone to live among Russian tribes. The two tribes are the *Radimitchians* and the *Vyatitchians*, – names that sound like patronymics from the first names *Radim* and *Vyatko* (and are explained as such in the *Nestor Chronicle*). This theory of their Polish origin is, however, very much to be doubted,<sup>29</sup> the more so as we have reason to believe that their common name *Lyakhs* (in a similar way as the name for the Poles) is a simple (hypocoristic) derivation from the Russian word *lyada* (*l'ada*), in Proto-Slavic *\*lęda*, meaning 'scorched earth'.<sup>30</sup> The *Radimitchians* and the *Vyatitchians* should thus be regarded as tribes who had forced their way into the forest area between the Dnieper and the Oka, perhaps even as far as to the upper Don, and cleared space there for agriculture by burning off the forest, thereby fertilizing the soil.

It seems quite possible that the above-mentioned grouping of the earliest known Russian tribes was the outcome of a slow expansion, which started from the original East Slavic home in the river basin of the Dnieper. This original home had its western boundaries in the eastern Vistula-tributaries and the Carpathians. It was almost identical with the present Byelorussia and the present Ukraine (including Bucovina and Bessarabia). There is hardly any doubt that the *Dregovitchians* should be considered the ancestors of the Byelorussians, whereas the Ukrainians have descended from the remaining tribes of the southern group, i.e. from the *Buzhanians*, the *Derevlyanians*, the *Polyanians*, and the *Severians*. But in the case of the *Slovenians* and the *Krivitchians* (as well as of the *Pōlotchians*) the situation is a very different one. We have reason to believe that these tribes were originally settlers who had pushed up from the south right through a Balto-Lithuanian and Finnish population, up till then an obstructive block on their north side but now burst asunder by the Slavic expansion. The Lithuanians and the Letts (Latvians) were now driven westward in the direction of the Baltic, whereas their kinsmen, the *Galindians* (Old Russian *Gol'ad'*) mentioned in the *Nestor Chronicle*,<sup>31</sup> retreated eastward to the river Oka, where later on they amalgamated with a Russian population. In the same way the Slavic expansion separated the Baltic-Finnish tribes from the Volga-Finnish ones. These Slavic

<sup>26</sup> Tret'jakov, p. 122.

<sup>27</sup> Šaxmatov, *Sud'by*, p. 37–39.

<sup>28</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 319. I am, however, unable to accept his own theory.

<sup>30</sup> Vasmer, *Rocznik Slawistyczny*, Vol. VI, p. 210–212, and Berneker, *Slavisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1908–13, p. 705.

<sup>31</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 109.

settlers who moved north probably became the stock of the later Great-Russian population, or certain parts of it. However, we must also regard as settlers the forest-scorching tribes, the Radimitchians and the Vyatitchians, who proceeded eastward in the direction of the Oka and the upper Don. They may be considered the ancestors of other parts of the later Great-Russian population. Thus we find the germ of the later ethnic division into Great-Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians in a prehistoric distribution of the original Proto-Russian population. It should not be inferred from this, however, that there were already three dialects in existence in prehistory. On the contrary, it seems more than probable that even at the beginning of historical times a uniform Russian language was spoken with only very slight regional variations. It would be a grave error to transfer later dialectal boundaries back to prehistoric times, as certain philologists tend to do.<sup>32</sup>

## 3.

In order to explain the rise of these later dialectal boundaries a theory has been launched by the famous Russian linguist Shakhmatov.<sup>33</sup> This theory – a very ingenious and complicated one – presupposes not only a North Russian and a South Russian group, differing in dialect, but also an East Russian group extending along the Don down to the Azov Sea. The fact that this East Russian group is never once mentioned in our oldest written source, the *Nestor Chronicle*, is – according to the above theory – not at all surprising as the East Russian group of tribes had long since been forced to retreat up the Don under the pressure from advancing nomadic peoples.<sup>34</sup> Except for the Russian *Principality of Tmutarakan* in the Taman peninsula, there was no trace left of these East Russians in the Don-Azov area at the time of the *Nestor Chronicle*. In the course of their retreat from the Don-Azov area the East Russians are assumed to have penetrated not only into the region of the Vyatitchians and the Radimitchians (according to Shakhmatov probably non-Russian, West Slavic tribes), but even across the upper Dnieper into the territory of the Dregovitchians.<sup>35</sup> Together with this tribe they founded the Byelorussian people, whereas the result of their amalgamation with the Vyatitchians was the southern branch of the Great Russian people. Through the centralizing effect of the later Muscovite state a convergence took place between the originally North Russian group and the south eastern branch of the East Russian group, so that their languages appeared as purely dialectal variants of the same Great Russian language. Between North Great Russian and South Great Russian was a zone in which Moscow was later on to be built, and

<sup>32</sup> See for example St. Smal-Stocki and T. Gartner, *Grammatik der ruthenischen (ukrainischen) Sprache*, Wien 1913.

<sup>33</sup> Šaxmatov, "K voprosu ob obrazovanii russkix narečij", *Russkij Filologičeskij Vestnik*, Vol. XXXII, p. 1–12, – "K obrazovaniju russkix narečij i russkix narodnostej", *Žurnal Mišisterstva Narodnogo Prosveščeniija*, 1899, IV, p. 324–84, – *Očerki*, p. XX.

<sup>34</sup> Šaxmatov, *Očerki*, p. XXIV.

<sup>35</sup> Šaxmatov, *ibid.*, p. XLII.

here was developed a transitional dialect, which became the basis of the Russian literary language. According to this theory the graphic genealogy of the development would be the following.



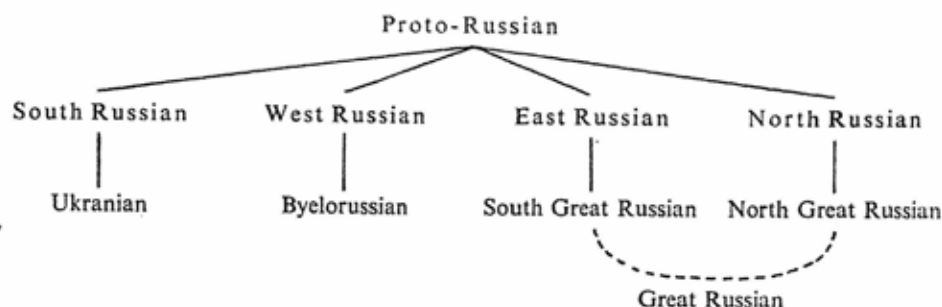
Unfortunately, this interesting theory is founded on sheer linguistic speculation and is without the faintest historical support. The linguistic school, founded by the great Russian linguist Fortunatov, took it for granted that similarities between two languages or dialects indicated their common descent from the same mother tongue.<sup>36</sup> As Ukrainian and (at least certain dialects of) Byelorussian have features in common, they must therefore have developed from one and the same language, which is termed South Russian. And as the South Great Russian dialect and (at least certain other dialects of) Byelorussian show unmistakable similarities, this should be explained through the existence of a common mother tongue, which is then identified with East Russian (the real existence of which language cannot be proved by any kind of evidence). But as, on the other hand, South Great Russian exhibits only purely dialectal divergences from North Great Russian, it is inferred that they have evolved from a common mother tongue, viz. North Russian.

The fundamental mistake on which is based the theory of a threefold origin of the Russian language consists in a far too literal application of Schleichers otherwise long discarded theory of the genealogical evolution of languages.<sup>37</sup> According to this theory similarities between two dialects can only be explained by assuming a parent language. But even apart from this the whole theory suffers from the serious flaw that there is no evidence whatever in support of the dramatic retreat of the surmised East Russian people up the Don and across the Dnieper. This very flaw has led other Russian philologists<sup>38</sup> to presuppose not three but four language groups within the Proto-Russian language. Besides the East Russian group (which is not assumed to have migrated across the Dnieper) and the North and South Russian groups, they distinguish a West Russian group. The genealogical table of the languages consequently appears in the following form:

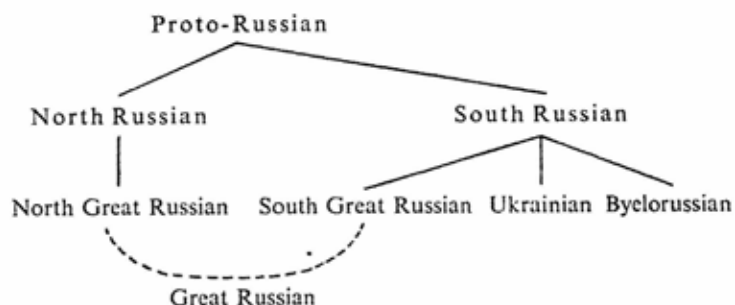
<sup>36</sup> T. Lehr-Splawinski, "Stosunki pokrewieństwa języków ruskich", *Rocznik Slawistyczny*, Vol. IX (Cracow 1921-22), 1930, p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> August Schleicher, *Compendium der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen*, 1861-62 (2nd edition 1866, 3rd-4th edition 1871-76.)

<sup>38</sup> Nikolaj Durnovo, *Očerki*, p. 173. — The theory of a quadruple origin of the modern East Slavic languages has recently been reinterpreted in a very interesting way by Yuri Šerech, "Problems in the formation of Belorussian", in *Word*, Vol. IX, Supplement, New York 1953.



To the North and South Russian groups, which are historically vouched for and correspond with actual conditions as seen in our oldest non-linguistic sources, were thus added two groups whose existence was inferred in the same manner as the threefold origin of the preceding theory. Being of a purely speculative character these theories were bound to meet with well-grounded opposition. There can be no doubt that the only acceptable theory must be a dualistic one, very clearly and convincingly formulated by the Russian philologist Trubetzkoy<sup>39</sup> and also, independently, by the Polish philologist Lehr-Splawinski<sup>40</sup>. This theory presupposes only two Proto-Russian dialects, the North Russian and the South Russian, and on this basis the graphic table will be the following:



The later merging of North Great Russian and South Great Russian was – according to the train of thought of this theory – due to purely historical (non-linguistic) factors, namely the centralizing cultural influence of the Muscovite State. The remaining two, Ukrainian and Byelorussian, were affected by other historical factors and developed dialectal peculiarities which separated them from South Great Russian. At the same time they began to diverge mutually owing to different historical conditions.

As has already been pointed out, the similarities between Great Russian, Byelorussian, and Ukrainian link them together into one group, generally termed *East Slavic* as opposed to *West Slavic* (Polish, Czech, Slovak, and certain other languages) and to *South Slavic* (comprising Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian). Ac-

<sup>39</sup> N. Trubetzkoy, "Einiges über die russische Lautentwicklung und die Auflösung der gemein-russischen Spracheinheit", *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, Vol. I (Leipzig 1925), p. 287ff.

<sup>40</sup> Lehr-Splawinski, p. 23ff.

tually such a division of the whole Slavic-speaking area ought to rest on one or more *criteria divisionis*, points on which all three groups diverge mutually. If for instance their common mother tongue had a certain feature *A*, this feature would appear in a different modification in each group, e.g. as  $A^1$ ,  $A^2$ , and  $A^3$ . In reality, however, there are no such infallible *criteria divisionis*. On the contrary, points of divergence between East and South Slavic turn out to be points of similarity between East and West Slavic, and where East Slavic deviates from West Slavic it proves identical with South Slavic. It would, however, be just as great a mistake to infer that the East Slavic group had the same source of origin as the South Slavic one, i.e. that both had developed from the same parent language (a theory which was actually put forward by Shakhmatov)<sup>41</sup> as to conclude that East and West Slavic have at any time constituted a linguistic unity. Such claims are, we repeat, the results of the far too mechanical application by the Fortunatov school of Schleicher's antiquated theory. When reasoning in this way one excludes the possibility of East Slavic being at the same time closer to South Slavic in some respects and closer to West Slavic in others. Linguistic phenomena may have moved like waves, crossing and re-crossing. It is therefore the total sum of linguistic features separating East Slavic from West Slavic (but not from South Slavic) and of those separating East Slavic from South Slavic (but not from West Slavic) which constitutes East Slavic as an independent unit, as distinct from the two other groups. Still, it must always be borne in mind that this division cannot be expected to hold good in every case without exception: even if East Slavic may be said to diverge from one of the two other groups on a certain point, it does not follow that a dialect within this totality might not coincide with the other group on this very point. Dialects may break through the barriers surrounding the totality.

## 4.

When attempting to establish the differences which distinguish the three Slavic language groups severally, we regard them in relation to a reconstructed Proto-Slavic language. This language is supposed to have developed from the Indoeuropean parent language from which, in prehistoric times, have evolved the various great language families, e.g. Indo-Iranian, Armenian, Baltic, Slavic, Greek, Romance, Germanic, and others.<sup>42</sup> All three Slavic groups will consequently have certain features in common which characterize them as Slavic. Such features are:

- (1) the affinity of the Slavic languages to the so-called *satem*-division (including Indo-Iranian and Baltic) as opposed to the West European *centum*-division,
  - (2) the coincidence of certain vowels,
  - (3) the monophthongization of all diphthongs,
  - (4) the palatalization of guttural consonants before (old and new) front vowels,
- and

<sup>41</sup> Šaxmatov, *Očerki*, Introduction.

<sup>42</sup> Entwistle and Morison, p. 20ff.

(5) certain laws affecting initial and final sounds and causing partly the tendency to avoid hiatus and partly the disappearance of final consonants.

It would lead too far, however, if these and many similar phenomena were to be treated in detail at this point. We must here confine ourselves to a comparison between the three Slavic language groups and the presupposed Proto-Slavic parent language from which they have developed, each according to its individual laws.

When we say that the development of East Slavic diverges from that of West Slavic, we are chiefly concerned with three features:

(1) the circumstance that East Slavic (like South Slavic) simplified the consonant groups *-tl-* and *-dl-* to *-l-*, whereas West Slavic preserved them (cf. Proto-Slavic *\*pletli* > Polish *plotli*, Russ. *pleli*; – Proto-Slavic *\*mydlo* > Polish *mydło*, Russ. *mylo*). It should, however, be noted that certain North Great Russian dialects did not follow the general Russian development, but, like West Slavic, they preserved the consonant groups *-tl-* and *-dl-* and modified them to *-kl-* and *-gl-*;<sup>43</sup>

(2) the circumstance that East Slavic (like South Slavic) modified the consonant groups *kv-* and *gv-* to *cv-* and *zv-* initially before front vowels, whereas West Slavic preserved them unchanged (cf. Proto-Slavic *\*květb* > Polish *kwiat*, Russ. *cvet*; – Proto-Slavic *\*gvězda* > Polish *gwiazda*, Russ. *zvezda*). Certain Ukrainian and North Great Russian dialects did, however, not conform to the general Russian development, but preserved the initial groups *kv-* and *gv-* unchanged, as did West Slavic;<sup>44</sup> and

(3) the circumstance that East Slavic (like South Slavic) introduced an epenthetic *-l-* after labials when followed by *j*, whereas West Slavic only palatalized them (cf. Proto-Slavic *\*zemja* > Polish *ziemia*, Russ. *zempl'a*; – Proto-Slavic *\*lubjq* > Polish *lubię*, Russ. *l'ubl'u*). Two things should, however, be noted: one, that Great Russian dialects tend to leave out this epenthetic *l*, and the other, that it may occasionally appear in Polish dialects.<sup>45</sup>

It may further be added that in East Slavic the consonant groups *tj* and *dj* developed into *č* and *(d)ž*, but in West Slavic into *c* and *(d)z*; – but East Slavic did not on this point agree with South Slavic (whose constituent dialects developed mutually different sounds, Old Church Slavic *št* and *žd*, Serbo-Croatian *ć* and *dj*, Slovenian *č* and *j*).<sup>46</sup>

Proceeding now to the points on which East Slavic differs from South Slavic but agrees with West Slavic (especially Polish), we are mainly concerned with the following features:

(1) the circumstance that in East Slavic (as in West Slavic, except Czech) the so-called *liquida-metathesis* of the sound groups *tolt*, *telt*, *tort*, *tert* (the letter *t* representing any possible consonant) does not lengthen the vowel, whereas a lengthening takes place in South Slavic (and Czech) (cf. Proto-Slavic *\*bergb* > Russ. *bereg*, Polish *brzeg*, Old Church Slav. *brěgb*; – Proto-Slavic *\*gordb* > Russ. *gorod*, Pol. *gród*, Old Church Slav. *gradb*);

<sup>43</sup> Šaxmatov, *Očerok*, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> Šaxmatov, *ibid.*, p. 103 ff. – Cf. Henrik Birnbaum, "Zu ursl. *kv-*", *Scando-Slavica* II, p. 29 ff.

<sup>45</sup> Šaxmatov, *ibid.*, p. 107 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Entwistle and Morison, p. 58.



(2) the circumstance that neither East Slavic nor West Slavic lengthens the vowel in case of metathesis of the initial groups *ort-* and *olt-* (*t* representing any consonant) except when the group in question had a rising intonation, whereas in South Slavic the lengthening invariably occurs (cf. Proto-Slavic \**orvǫnъ* > Russ. *rovnyj*, Pol. *równy*, Serbo-Croatian *rávan*; – Proto-Slavic \**olkǫtъ* > Russ. *lokot'*, Pol. *łokieć*, Serbo-Croatian *lakat*);

(3) the circumstance that East Slavic, like West Slavic, or at least like Polish, in certain cases (gen. sing., nom.-acc. plur. of the feminine *ja*-stems, and acc. plur. of the masculine *jo*-stems) had a special unnasalized ending, whereas South Slavic had a nasalized one (cf. Old Russ. *dušę*, Pol. *duże*, Old Church Slavonic *dušę*; – Old. Russ. *koně*, Pol. *konie*, Old Church Slavonic *konję*);

(4) the circumstance that East Slavic, like Polish, has palatalized all consonants before front vowels, whereas the other Slavic languages have either not palatalized them at all, or only dentals in this position; and

(5) the circumstance that in East Slavic, as in Polish and certain other West Slavic tongues, the sound *e* – under definable conditions – becomes *o* when preceded by palatalized consonants and sibilants (cf. Russ. *s'elo/s'ola*, Pol. *siolo/siola*), whereas the other Slavic languages have no such change.

The linguistic divergences and convergences, pointed out above, between the three great Slavic language groups have been formulated as absolute as possible. Particularly, the term *East Slavic* has been employed to designate all three East Slavic languages. However, there can be no doubt that at a time when uniformity of language had already ceased to exist between the East Slavic tongues, certain backward movements occurred here and there within the East Slavic area. These backward movements caused certain features, which have been mentioned above as characteristic of East Slavic, to be dropped again later in some languages within this group. As instances of this process may be mentioned the loss of palatalization in consonants before the vowels *e* and *i* and the leveling of the vowels *i* and *y* in Ukrainian, by which means this language approaches South Slavic and Czech (cf. Russ. *n'ebo*, Ukr. *nebo*, Czech *nebe*, Serbo-Croatian *nebo*, or Russ. *s'ila*, Ukr. *syla*, Czech *sila*, Serbo-Croatian *sila*). There can hardly be any doubt that neither of these two phenomena is original, as some Ukrainian philologists seem to believe, but must decidedly date from a later period.

What is the internal relationship between the three East Slavic languages? In dealing with this question we shall have to consider almost the same aspects as in the question of the relationship between the three great Slavic language groups. It has been maintained, and rightly, that the features of divergence between Great Russian and Ukrainian, when compared with the corresponding features in Byelorussian, will prove to be border-lines: some of them will be lines of demarcation not only between Great Russian and Ukrainian, but also between Great Russian and Byelorussian, whereas others will circumscribe Ukrainian only, in which cases Great Russian and Byelorussian will coincide. Taking Great Russian to be split up into the two main dialects, North Great Russian and South Great Russian, we find that on some points one of these dialects will coincide with one

of the two other East Slavic (Russian) languages, i.e. either Ukrainian or Byelorussian, while in some points the other dialect will coincide with the other East Slavic (Russian) language. We even come across features connecting Ukrainian, Byelorussian, and certain Russian border dialects in contradistinction to the bulk of Great Russian dialects. We thus get a highly complicated picture of intersecting lines denoting dialectal developments which have probably taken place at widely different times.

In order to explain these divergences and convergences between the three East Slavic (Russian) languages and their dialects it has been considered necessary<sup>47</sup> to presuppose a background of numerous migrations which might have led to a re-grouping of dialects. It will, however, hardly be possible to accept such an explanation as scientifically sound. The actual development of these languages should much rather be ascribed to historical factors, that is to say the now parallel, now diverging fates in history of these three peoples. It is interesting to observe that Great Russian, though spoken by descendants of tribes that were largely settlers, has always been of a somewhat conservative character, a fact which becomes evident when it is compared with the reconstructable Proto-Russian (East Slavic) language. Ukrainian and Byelorussian, on the other hand, have gained their distinctive characters by developing away from the common Proto-Russian mother tongue.

## 5.

The distinction between a North Great Russian and a South Great Russian dialect depends on a few features of phonologic character separating the two dialects. For instance the Proto-Russian plosive *g* has been preserved as such in North Great Russian, while in South Great Russian it has become a fricative.<sup>48</sup> Another instance is provided by the circumstance that North Great Russian tends to distinguish between the unstressed sounds *o* and *a* after hard consonants as well as between the unstressed sounds *e* and *a* after palatalized consonants, at any rate in syllables immediately preceding a stressed syllable,<sup>49</sup> while in South Great Russian these sounds are, as a rule, leveled under one sound, namely *a* after hard consonants and *e* after palatalized ones.<sup>50</sup> Further it may be pointed out that in North Great Russian the phonemes *c* and *č* are generally leveled under one sound (which is, however, not the same everywhere),<sup>51</sup> while in South Great Russian they are kept distinct.<sup>52</sup> It goes without saying that within the North Great Russian as well as within the South Great Russian dialect there are many divergences of speech of such distinctive character as to cause the two main

<sup>47</sup> So by Šaxmatov in his *Očerky*, passim.

<sup>48</sup> Durnovo, *Očerky*, p. 76, 79, — *Vvedeniye*, p. 111, 122, — Avanesov, p. 203.

<sup>49</sup> Durnovo, *Očerky*, p. 76, — *Vvedeniye*, p. 111, — Avanesov, p. 212.

<sup>50</sup> Durnovo, *Očerky*, p. 78, — *Vvedeniye*, p. 122, — Avanesov, p. 224.

<sup>51</sup> Durnovo, *Očerky*, p. 77, — *Vvedeniye*, p. 112, — Avanesov, p. 213.

<sup>52</sup> Durnovo, *Očerky*, p. 79, — *Vvedeniye*, p. 122, — Avanesov, p.

dialects to fall into several subdialects. Within the North Great Russian area we are able to distinguish 5 such subdialects:

- (1) the Leningrad-Novgorod dialect,
- (2) the Olonets dialect,
- (3) the White Sea dialect,
- (4) the Volga-Ural dialect, and
- (5) the Vladimir-Volga dialect,<sup>53</sup>

and in the South Great Russian area we distinguish 3 subdialects:

- (1) the Kaluga-Tula dialect,
- (2) the Orel-Kursk dialect, and
- (3) the Ryazan-Voronezh-Tambov dialect.<sup>54</sup>

Between these two groups of subdialects is a zone, extending from Tver (now Kalinin) via Moscow to Penza, within which we find the transitional Central Great Russian dialect.<sup>55</sup> This dialect is chiefly characterized by the combination of certain North Great Russian features (e.g. the plosive *g*) and certain South Great Russian ones (e.g. the leveling of unstressed *a* and *o*). From this Central Great Russian dialect has sprung the Russian literary language.

When the Ukrainian and the Byelorussian languages are considered in relation to Great Russian it is very easy to see that they have a considerable number of features in common which separate them from Great Russian. On these points they have developed further away from the basis common to all three East Slavic languages.

We have seen that North Great Russian and South Great Russian differ from one another in that the former has a plosive, the latter a fricative *g*.<sup>56</sup> Ukrainian and Byelorussian at one time had the same *g* as South Great Russian, but they developed it in such a way that it now appears a pure *h*.<sup>57</sup> Another characteristic divergence is that of Great Russian exhibiting the groups *oj* and *ej* both finally and medially (developed from Proto-Slavic *aj* and *bj*), while Byelorussian has *yj* and *ij*, and Ukrainian (*y* and *i* having become identical) has *yj* (e.g. verbal forms of the type Russ. *moju*, Byeloruss. *myju*, Ukr. *myju*; – imperative forms like Russ. *pej*, Byeloruss. *pij*, Ukr. *pyj*; – adjective forms like Russ. *slepoj*, Byeloruss. *sl'apy(j)*, Ukr. *slipyj*).<sup>58</sup> – A further point of interest is the circumstance that where Russian has the groups *ro*, *re*, *lo*, *le* (developed from Proto-Slavic *rb*, *rb*, *lb*, *lb*), Byelorussian has *ry*, *ri*, *ly*, *li*, and Ukrainian *ry*, *ly* (e.g. Russ. *drova*, Ukr. and Byeloruss. *dryva*; – Russ. *bloxa*, Ukr. and Byeloruss. *blyxa*).<sup>59</sup> One of the

<sup>53</sup> Avanesov, p. 214. – Cf. the map in Durnovo, *Očer.*

<sup>54</sup> Avanesov, p. 229.

<sup>55</sup> Avanesov, p. 230.

<sup>56</sup> See above p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> Avanesov, p. 204.

<sup>58</sup> Avanesov, p. 205.

<sup>59</sup> Avanesov, *ibid.*

principal characteristics separating the Ukrainian literary language from the Russian one is that *o* and *e* in closed syllables become Ukr. *i*. In such positions Byelorussian has diphthongs (*uo*, *üö*, *ie*).<sup>60</sup> Now, as certain Ukrainian dialects also have such diphthongs we are here furnished with evidence of a close proximity between the two languages at an earlier stage, as distinct from Great Russian which follows more conservative lines on this point as well. The phonological disagreement between Ukrainian *nis/nosa*, *pič/peči* and Great Russian *nos/nosa*, *peč/peči* provides one of the most conspicuous differences between the two languages. We might mention several other, less characteristic features, which are common to Ukrainian and Byelorussian.

On the points where Byelorussian differs from Ukrainian it usually coincides with Great Russian or one of the Great Russian dialects. For instance Byelorussian exhibits a feature which is otherwise characteristic of South Great Russian, viz. the circumstance that *o* and *a* are leveled after hard consonants and *e* and *a* after soft consonants in unstressed pretonic syllables. This feature has evidently moved like a wave right across Central Russia regardless of dialect borders. But there is at least one feature peculiar to Byelorussian which is not found in either Ukrainian or Russian, and that is the characteristic pronunciation of palatalized *t* and *d* as *č* and *dž*. The identical phenomenon is found in Polish and has led some Russian philologists to assume that Byelorussian has sprung from a Polish substratum. It would seem much more reasonable to assume that a wave of similar character passed from Polish into Byelorussian without stopping at the linguistic border-line between the two languages. Such an assumption is the more natural as Byelorussian was actually spoken within the boundaries of the Polish State during a long period and did not escape being strongly influenced by the Polish language.

<sup>60</sup> Avanesov, p. 208.

### Chapter 3.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE RUSSIAN ETHNIC NAMES

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### 1.

No question has been more passionately discussed than that of the origin of the words *Russia* and *Russian*. It has long been, and still is in our day, the object of extremely violent and irreconcilable divergences of opinion.

Unfortunately, conscious or unconscious national feelings have often proved a disturbance to purely scientific discussion and hampered sober investigation. Any theory suggesting that the ethnic name of the Russian people might not be

of indigenous but of foreign origin has always tended to arouse the suspicion in patriotic (or even nationalistic) Russians that at the bottom of this theory was a feeling of national superiority in its originators. And it must be admitted that many a non-Russian scholar's conviction of the foreign origin of the word *Russian* has been connected with far too exaggerated ideas of the general cultural and, especially, political inferiority of the Russians in old times. And so we are faced with the extraordinary fact that for more than 150 years now the most desperate attempts have been made to find an explanation of the word *Russian* which would be more acceptable to sensitive national pride, instead of acknowledging the only possible and correct theory, viz. that the name is of Scandinavian, more especially of Old Swedish origin.<sup>1</sup>

The whole question turns on the interpretation of a text which we find incorporated in the oldest Russian historical monument, the so-called *Nestor Chronicle*.<sup>2</sup> The author, or authors, of this source actually knew perfectly well how the name had originated. Apparently they had their information from certain traditions, still alive in the royal family and the royal retinue of Kiev and Novgorod in the second half of the 11th century and at the early beginning of the 12th. We are told in a somewhat dramatized and partly tendentious form *sub anno* 862 the old legend of how the Slovenians round Lake Ilmen and their kinsmen, the Krivitchians, with their nearest Finnish neighbors had decided to invite some princes, or chieftains, of the people *Rus'*, living beyond the Baltic Sea, to take over the rule in their country, whereupon three brothers, mentioned by name, came over with their kith and kin at the head of the entire people and settled in the Finno-Slavic border area.<sup>3</sup> This area is then geographically further defined by the place-names Izborsk, south of Lake Peipus, Ladoga, south of Lake Ladoga, and Belozersk, south of Lake Beloje Ozero. It has the form of a triangle and controls the water-ways radiating inland from the Gulf of Finland. Later the centre of gravity was shifted to Novgorod, north of Lake Ilmen, to Polotsk, on the Dvina river, and to Rostov, and so the triangle was very considerably enlarged.<sup>4</sup> In this way – says the chronicler – did the name *the Russian Country* (*Russkaja Zeml'a*) come into existence.<sup>5</sup> The chronicler goes on to relate how the people *Rus'* gradually moved southward, reached the Dnieper, settled at Smolensk and Lyubetch, and how with the conquest of Kiev they gained control of the important water-way from the Baltic to the Black Sea.<sup>6</sup> Kiev now became the capital of *the Russian Country*. And so began the history of Kievan Russia.

It need hardly concern us whether the strangers' seizing of the power actually happened in the legitimistic manner which the author of the *Nestor Chronicle*,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mošin's articles, quoted in the bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, Part I, ed. by Lixačov, Moscow-Leningrad 1950, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

influenced by the ideas of his contemporaries, has projected back into the past. Many scholars have been, and still are, led astray by a far too literal conception of this legend which has caused them to parallelize the actual facts with the Viking campaigns in Western Europe and to regard as mostly identical phenomena the Norman state-formations and the foundation of the Russian state. There is no reason to believe that this identification is correct,<sup>7</sup> in all probability no actual agreement ever existed between the *Rus'*-people and the Slavic-Finnish tribes of the type which the chronicler presupposes. There is sufficiently convincing evidence that the legend of the invitation from the Slavs and Finns to the *Rus'*-people, as we read it in the *Nestor Chronicle*, is in reality nothing but a variant of the numerous Swedish legends of three brothers, found in the parts of Finland where in primeval times a Swedish population took root among the Finns, and also in certain parts of Estonia which have, or had, a Swedish population of settlers.<sup>8</sup> Nor should we probably take too literally the information that the *Rus'*-people came direct from beyond the Baltic Sea. Even if it is most probable that this people had its ultimate origin beyond the sea, i.e. in Sweden, there is every reason for assuming that an elementary and spontaneous expansion of Swedish ethnic elements had taken place over decennaries and generations along either side of the Gulf of Finland and up the Russian rivers before a final settlement was established in the Finno-Slavic triangle south of Lake Ladoga.

## 2.

It is, however, of vital importance to note the following points in the chronicler's account: (1) he recognizes the connection between the name of *Rus'* and a people living mainly beyond the Baltic Sea, and (2) he emphasizes the part played by the adjoining Finnish tribes in the early history of the *Rus'*-people. For there can be no doubt that the Slavic form, *Rus'*, corresponds exactly to the Finnish form *\*Rōtsi*, by which term the Finnish (and Estonian) peoples have designed the Swedish nation to this very day. It is obvious, then, from what has been said above, that the Swedish population of settlers, with which the Slavs became acquainted, had already previously been in contact with Finnish tribes, before encountering the Slavs. And so it was through these tribes that the Slavs came to know its name.<sup>9</sup> As there were no forms in the Slavic language ending in *-c'*, except in cases of clear alternation with *k* or *č*, a Finnish *\*Rōtsi* could not

<sup>7</sup> Ad. Stender-Petersen, "Études Varègues III. La conquête Danoise de la Samlande", *Classica et mediaevalia*, Vol. I, Copenhagen 1942, p. 92ff., and *Varangica, passim*. - Cf. A. A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*, Cambridge 1946.

<sup>8</sup> Ad. Stender-Petersen, *Die Varägersage als Quelle der altrussischen Chronik*, Aarhus-Leipzig 1934.

<sup>9</sup> V. Thomsen, *Det russiske riges grundlæggelse ved nordboerne* (= *Samlede afhandlinger*, Vol. I), Copenhagen 1919, p. 231. This book is here quoted for the last Danish edition. Originally it appeared in English, *The Relations between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia*, Oxford-London 1877, and was translated into German (*Der Ursprung des russischen Staates*, Gotha 1879), Swedish (*Ryska rikets grundläggning genom skandinaverna*, Stockholm 1882) and Russian (*Načalo russkogo gosudarstva*, Moscow 1891).

possibly be apperceived as *Ruc'*, but must necessarily assume the form *Rus'*. The possibility cannot be excluded either that the Finnish *\*Rōtsi* may have reached the Slavs in the dialectally modified pronunciation of *\*Rōssi*, which, in the Slavic language, must also appear as *Rus'*.<sup>10</sup> The rendering of Finnish *ō* as Slavic *u* would also be perfectly justifiable, which may be seen from the fact that Finnish *\*Sōmi* (now *Suomi*) has become *Sum'*.

The question, then, is whether there was actually a people living beyond the Baltic Sea whose name might sound to the Finns as *\*Rōtsi* and be passed on to the Slavs as *Rus'*. Research on this point has hitherto committed the error of assuming that the Swedish word, supposed to be the basis of the Finnish rendering, had derived in some way or other from the older regional name on which the present Swedish provincial name *Ros(lagen)* is based. This name designates the districts of the Swedish provinces Uppland and Östergötland which border on the sea (the Gulf of Bothnia), and which, in the Middle Ages, had been made liable to equip warships.<sup>11</sup> The older regional name was *Rōper* (definite form *Rōpin*), which was identical with the common appellative *rōper* 'rowing'. The people inhabiting these districts would then have been called something like *rōps-karlar*, or *rōps-mæn*, or *rōps-byggjar*, either derived from the name of the district, or, what is more likely, from the appellative itself. All three forms of the word are actually instanced.

The last of them must, at all events, have been a curious one, as the two parts of the word, *rōps* 'rowing', and *byggjar* 'inhabitants, dwellers', do not make sense when combined. Besides, *rōps* could only with difficulty be derived from *rōper* (or *Rōper*), whose gen. appeared as *rōpar* (or *Rōpar*). It therefore strikes me as being so obviously the correct solution when Ekblom<sup>12</sup> suggests the compound to be derived from a different, but closely related, Old Swedish word, namely the appellative *rōper*, gen. *rōp(er)s*, meaning 'road or narrow strait in which one may sail in a boat'. The *rōps-karlar*, *rōps-mæn*, or *rōps-byggjar*, which we encounter in the sources, may then be taken to mean people who travelled along, or lived at, such *rōprar*. For comparison we may refer to the English word *road* in the sense of 'sheltered stretch of water, where ships ride at anchor'.<sup>13</sup> By this improved etymology we are enabled to arrive at a new and plausible sense of the word which throws light on the manner in which this Old Swedish population of settlers spread eastward. We now get a picture of a population which over decennaries (or centuries) spread slowly along the shores and islands on

<sup>10</sup> Thomsen, p. 347, footnote 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 344.

<sup>12</sup> R. Ekblom, *Rus- et vareg- dans les noms de lieux de la région de Novgorod* (= *Archives d'Études Orientales*, Vol. XI), Stockholm 1915, p. 9. – I find no reason to accept the theory of Erland Hjærne who has formulated his opposition to Ekblom in his article "Roden", in *Namn och bygd*, Vol. XXXV, Uppsala 1947, p. 28 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *A New English Dictionary*, Vol. VIII, Oxford 1914, p. 723, – *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford 1947, p. 1744, – *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Springfield, Mass. 1947, p. 2155.



either side of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland, always following sheltered water-ways and penetrating up creeks and rivers far into the Finno-Slavic border area defined above. And it seems quite natural when we find the term *rōps-byggjar* used not only about the population in the later *Ros-lagen*, but until quite recently also about the Swedish-speaking inhabitants of the villages of *Roslep* (*\*Rōps-lup*) and *Rosta* (*\*Rōps-stad*) near the town of Nuckö on the Estonian west-coast (immediately opposite Vormsö).<sup>14</sup> Of further interest is the fact that local tradition among the Swedish population in Estonia and Finland not only generally stresses its own immigration from beyond the Baltic Sea, but in certain cases points expressly to *Roslagen* as its particular place of origin.<sup>15</sup> This persistent reference to *Roslagen* is obviously a later rationalization *ex post facto* of the word *rōps-byggjar* which the Swedish settlers had brought with them. Hence it is no wonder that the Estonian and Finnish populations simply attached the name of *Rōtsi*-people to these Swedish *rōps-byggjar*, who settled along their coasts and rivers. It is completely in agreement with the laws of the Finnish language that only the first element of the foreign word was taken over and employed to form this name.

The area populated by the Swedish *rōps-byggjar* naturally included their colonization area in the border country, which has been defined above as the triangle between Ladoga, Izborsk, and Belozersk, and later between Polotsk, Novgorod, and Rostov. Exploring the waterways leading inland from this area, they must very soon have come into contact with the Volga Bulgars and the Khazars and their flourishing trade. This very contact, and the influence issuing from the Khazars, must have been a very powerful stimulus to the very early emerging of a political organization among the *rōps-byggjar* of the triangle between Slavs and Finns. In my opinion, we find the first indication of this new political organization in the *Annales Bertiniani*. It must have been delegates from this first Swedish-Russian state-formation, in the sources called *Rhōs*, who reached Byzantium (in 839), where they were to conduct negotiations *amicitiæ causa*, apparently on behalf of their king or *chacanus*. Instead of returning along the Volga and by way of the Khazar Empire they preferred to accompany a Byzantine embassy to the imperial court at Ingelheim hoping for an easier journey to their own country. In Ingelheim they were taken for Swedes because they spoke Swedish. A country called *Rhōs* was still unknown in Western Europe. Here we have a date which may be safely regarded as the earliest date in the history of the *Rus'*- or *Rōtsi*-people's appearance on the stage as a nation deliberately seeking to establish commercial contact to the South and West. Actually this is the earliest date in the history of Russia.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Thomsen, p. 344, footnote 2.

<sup>15</sup> Stender-Petersen, *Die Varügersage*, p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> Stender-Petersen, "Das Problem" etc. - Cf. Thomsen, p. 258 and 348.

## 3.

It has been shown that the Slavs must have become acquainted with the name of this nation through their Estonian, or Vepsian, or Merian neighbors, i.e. through the Finns. Their first direct contact with it was established when the Scandinavian colonizers extended their area to comprise Polotsk, Novgorod, and Rostov as well. From the moment when the *Rōtsi*-people took possession of the supremely important Valdai district, the highest hills in the interior of Russia and a plateau where are found the headwaters of the three great rivers Dvina, Dniepr, and Volga, they were in a key-position not only to the trade on the Volga and Caspian regions, but also to the trade between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The successfully started expansion was continued southward and changed its nature. The colonizers and settlers became warriors and merchants. The South Russian Slavic population, which had hitherto been tributary to the Khazars, was now gradually detached from its eastern connections and made tributary to the Scandinavian armed merchants, who established their factories everywhere in the typically Slavic towns, or *goroda*. The *land of the goroda*, the *Garða-riki*, became famous all over the Scandinavian countries.

Such a development would not have been possible if special commercial organizations had not formed themselves at a rather early period in order to provide security against the risks involved in this trade. We know the names of two of these corporations: one called itself the *\*Kulbings* or *Kylfings*,<sup>17</sup> the other the *\*Vārings* or *Værings*.<sup>18</sup> Both names have been preserved for us in later Russian and Byzantine sources, partly as *kolb'agi* and *var'agi*, partly as *kulpingoi* and *varangoi*. They established the commercial connections between Scandinavia and Byzantium, and very soon they also took over the function of recruiting armed warriors in Scandinavia for service in Russia and in Constantinople. After the establishment of a central kingdom in Kiev the name of *Rus'* was attached to the entire young state with its population irrespective of ethnic origin, while the name of *\*vāring* came into use as a term for any Scandinavian, immigrated from the North. Such is the terminology of the *Nestor Chronicle*. The name of the *\*kulbings*, however, gradually sank into complete oblivion. If in the XIth and XIIth Century's Kiev the origin of the name of *\*vāring* had been entirely forgotten as being associated with commerce, it was not so in Northern Russia, where it remained for a long time a regional term for traveling tradesmen and buyers.

Characteristically enough, it proved somewhat difficult to derive from the collective noun *Rus'* a term designating the individual member of the people. Even to-day the Russian will, as a rule, exclusively use the adjective derivation *russkij*, whereas the Russian language has a substantive term for practically all other

<sup>17</sup> Stender-Petersen, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Wortes altnord. *kylfingr*, altruss. *kolb'ag*", *Acta Philologica Scandinavica*, Copenhagen 1931-32, p. 181. - Cf. *Varangica*, p. 89 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Stender-Petersen, "Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Wortes *væringi*, russ. *var'ag*", *Acta Philologica Scandinavica*, Copenhagen 1930, p. 26. - Cf. *Varangica*, p. 89 ff.

nationalities. There was of course in Old Russian a derivation, *rusin*, but it is evident that it differs in its formation from the other known Slavic national names (e.g. monosyllabic names as *srb*, *čech*, \**lęx*, or names in *-ak* as *slovak*, *pol'ak*, or names in *-enin* as *slovenin* etc.). On the other hand, it is in complete correspondance with such derived forms as *čudin*, from the collective ethnic name *Čud'*, or *litvin*, *mordvin*, *ugrin*, from the collective ethnic names *Litva*, *Mordva*, *Ugra* etc., – all of them terms denoting foreign nationalities. It has proved very difficult for the word, *rusin*, to become an integral part of the language, and it only survives as a specific term for the Galician population (cf. the Latinized, artificial form of *Ruthens*).<sup>19</sup> This was also the case with the patronymic, *rusič*, which is found in the *Lay of Prince Igor* and may be parallelized with such Old Russian tribal names as *krivič*, *v'atič*, and *dregovič*. Most probably it had a poetic and emotional function and, therefore, could not simply stand for 'a Russian'.<sup>20</sup> A third attempt to form an appellative similarly failed. In analogy with the word-pair *gus'/gusak* was formed a derivation *rusak* from *Rus'*, but somehow this form became tinged, to a certain degree, with self-irony, perhaps owing to associations with the meaning of the above-mentioned word-pair, and so it became unfit for general use. Incidentally, the possibility cannot be excluded that the meaning of the word, 'Russian to the core, Russian *par excellence*', has been influenced by another *rusak*, meaning 'grey hare', which again should be taken in correlation with *bel'ak* 'a hare whose fur changes in winter' (from the word *belyj*, 'white'). The word *rusak*, then, indicates an especially persevering or hardy hare, a first-rate hare (cf. the expression *rusak-materik* in Nekrasov).<sup>21</sup> By association this word may have been contaminated with the word *Rus'* and so formed a metaphor to denote persons of remarkably consistent national characteristics. As for the word *rusak* in the sense of 'grey hare', it probably derives from the Russian adjective *rusyj*, 'reddish, blond' on the background of a semantic correlation in which the contrast 'reddish'/'white', was identical with that of 'coloured'/'colourless'. As will be seen presently the ethnic term *Rus'* was, at a very early stage, connected with the adjective *rusyj*, in order to avoid the unwellcome derivation of the former from foreign terms.

The same juxtaposition was first made by the Byzantines. The Old Russian term *Rus'* was rendered in Greek *Rhōs* when first the Byzantines came in touch with the above-mentioned delegation from the *Rus'*- or *Rōtsi*-people.<sup>22</sup> Much ado has been made of the fact that the name was not rendered *Rhus* (as in Arabian). Actually this is very easily explained. The envoys from the Prince of *Rus'*, who had assumed the Oriental, Turco-Khazarian title *khagan(chacanus)*<sup>23</sup> in the same way

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the article "Rusiny" in *Enciklopedičeskij Slovar'*, Vol. XXVII, St. Petersburg 1899, p. 296.

<sup>20</sup> Roman Jakobson in *La Geste du Prince Igor*, New York 1948, p. 262–264, and B. Unbegaun, *La Langue Russe au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Vol. I, Paris 1935, p. 275.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Dal', *Tolkovyj slovar' živogo velikorusskogo jazyka*, 4th ed., Vol. III, St. Petersburg-Moscow 1939, col. 1406.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. above p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> A. Preobraženskij, *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*, New York 1951, p. 280, – E. Berneker, *Slavisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1908–13, p. 468, –

as Prince Vladimir of Kiev later on was called *khagan*, had traveled to Constantinople by way of the Khazar Empire on the Volga river and had arrived in company with a Khazar embassy. The language they used in Constantinople was probably Khazar, and their ethnic name (in its Finnish form) was quite possibly pronounced *Rōs* by their Khazar interpreters. It was only natural that the Byzantines should render this name by the legendary name of the North Caucasian people *Rōs* (Greek *Rhōs*) found in Ezekiel ch. 38, vv. 2-3 and ch. 39, v. 1. There must, however, also have existed a pronunciation *Rhus*, from which, in connection with an adjective meaning 'red, red-haired', the Byzantines formed their plural form *rhusioi* for 'Russians', whence the idea arose that the colour of the hair was behind the ethnic name, exactly as in Russian. There was also an other plural form *rhōsoi*, and from that form was later derived the state-name *Rhōsia*. This form made its way into Russia ab. 1700 and appeared there as *Rossija*, to which was formed the adjective *rossijskij*. When in Western European medieval sources we find names spelt with *-z-* or *-c-* (i.e. phonetically *-ts-*) in the root instead of *-s-* (for example OHG. *Rūzā*, latinized *Ruzzi*, *Ruci*, MHG. *Riuze*, late Icel. *Rūza-land*, *Ruci-land*), it may very well be that they are not based on the Russian (Slavic) form at all, but on the original Finnish form (*Rōtsi*). Old Swedish *Ryza-land* is based on MHG. *Riuze-land*.<sup>24</sup>

The most serious attempt to undermine this Nordic etymology of the word *Rus'* has been made by scholars who hold that there was a direct genetic connection between the name of *Rus'* and the name of an Iranian people, the *Roxolans*, localized in Southern Russia. They have founded this theory on the fact, which to them is unintelligible, that apparently at a very early date a *Rus'*-people appears on the Taman' peninsula by the Azov Sea. No one has defended this theory more vigorously than Vernadsky.<sup>25</sup> In his opinion the name of *Roxolani* ought to be interpreted as being formed of two parts, the former being the Iranian word *rukhs* 'light'. And this word should then be the origin of the word *Rus'*.<sup>26</sup> This hypothesis is, however, completely untenable from the point of view of linguistic history, and, consequently, the main part of the colorful theory of Vernadsky about the pre-history of the Russian people must be considered disproved. From an Iranistic point of view only an adjective *raoxšna-* 'light' would be possible, derived from the stem *raok-* 'to shine' by means of the suffix *-sno-*,<sup>27</sup> but such a *raoxšna-* would under no circumstances be able to give the Slavic form *Rus'*, at the most a form *Ruš-*. The form *\*rukhs* (probably = *ruxš-* or *raoxš-*), reconstructed by Vernadsky, has never existed.

The idea of a connection existing between the word *Russian* and words meaning 'fair, reddish, blond' has proved incredibly vigorous. The above-mentioned entirely untenable connection of the word *Rus'* with *rusyj* 'blond' has been given a

<sup>24</sup> Thomsen, p. 350.

<sup>25</sup> George Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, New Haven 1946, p. 97, and *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 278.

<sup>27</sup> Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Strassburg 1904, col. 1487-89.

new lease of life in recent times, as Roman Smal-Stockyj<sup>28</sup> has endeavored to bolster it up by means of an ingenious theory. In a way he seems to accept the *Normannistic* assertion that the Swedish colonizers and settlers, who invaded the northern part of the Finno-Slavic border country from west and north, were called \**Rōtsi* by the Finns and *Rus'* by the Slavs on the basis of the name by which the settlers and colonizers called themselves. But at the same time he believes that there was, already before the Swedish invasion, a distinct semantic correlation *rus'*/*čern'*, the two parts of which had a social function: one word he believes to have served as a term for the ruling class, the other as a term for the subjugated class. This social correlation, according to his theory, sprang from an originally ethnic-national one: it is his belief that at a time when the Slavs, or their ancestors, were dominated by the Goths, they regarded them as a blond race and themselves as a black-haired one, "the black-haired and black-eyed Slavic people therefore regarded the blue-eyed and blond Goths as a contrasting and amazing race and called them *the Blonds* and themselves *the Blacks*." When later the Nordic *Rus'*-people penetrated into Slavic territory, its original name coincided with the already existing term *rus'* 'blond ruling class', in opposition to the term *čern'* 'dark serf-class'. The coincidence between Nordic *Rus'* and Gothic *Rus'* is said to have taken place on the Taman' peninsula where, according to Parxomenko's theory,<sup>29</sup> a *Rus'*-state had come into existence "at the shores of the Azov Sea", apparently as a branch of the Crimea-Goths. It is evident that the whole point of this ingenious, but somewhat fantastical theory is to explain the supposed early existence of a southern *Rus'*-state. However, it is hardly necessary to turn to explanations quite so complicated as that in order to connect the southern *Rus'* with the northern. To my mind the evidence of the hypothesis has not, so far, been decisive.

## 4.

In the beginning the name of *Rus'*, occasionally also interpreted as *Zeml'a Russkaja* 'the Russian Land', remained in connection with the state which was politically united under the rule of the Kievan Prince, or at least formally regarded as a unity centred in Kiev. Northern Russia, originally dependent on Novgorod, the great commercial center, was considered a Russian state, but did not as a matter of course come under the definition of *Rus'*. The great Tatar invasion in the first half of the 13th century and the fall of Kiev caused a general dissolution of old political ties and certain changes in the connotation of the word *Rus'*. While a new state, called *Muscovia*, rose in the North-East, the name of *Rus'* moved slowly westward and became the term of the Russian principalities which as a result of an inexorable historical fate were gradually incorporated in the Polish-Lithuanian Empire. In that country a distinction soon arose between a *Belaja*

<sup>28</sup> Roman Smal-Stocky, "The Origin of the Word 'Rus'", *Slavistica* 6, Winnipeg. Man., 1949.

<sup>29</sup> Parxomenko, *U istokov* etc.

*Rus* ('White Russia') and a *Čornaja Rus* ('Black Russia'), and even a *Červonaja Rus* ('Red Russia') was distinguished. Whereas the last of these names could be easily explained as derived from the name of the town of *Červen* and of the group of near-by towns called *Červenskije goroda*, the question is more difficult in the case of the two other terms, which may be literally translated 'White Russia' and 'Black Russia'. The simplest explanation seems to be in the old identification of white, red and black with west, south and north.<sup>30</sup> The explanations which have recently been offered for the opposition 'black'/'white' in ethnic names as being an opposition between 'unfree' and 'free',<sup>31</sup> does not seem satisfactory since, in our case, the term 'red' remains unexplained. Following his own theory Smal-Stocky is inclined to find racial distinction implied by this terminology.<sup>32</sup> Other scholars prefer to derive the name of Byelorussia (*Belorussija*) from names of such towns as *Bel'sk* or *Belostok*,<sup>33</sup> in spite of the fact that neither *Bel'sk* nor *Belostok* have played a role important enough to justify this generalization of their names.<sup>34</sup>

We must, however, remember that in the Middle Ages the adjective "white" was not attached to any one part of the country to the exclusion of all others. As has been pointed out by Perwolf, the Prussian Knights sometimes referred to the Muscovite Empire as the *white* Russia as early as the 15th century.<sup>35</sup> It is certainly more than doubtful whether Karskij is correct in his idea,<sup>36</sup> accepted by Vasmer,<sup>37</sup> that the Byelorussians got their name because of the "fair hair and white clothes of the population", especially as fair hair and white clothes are far from being characteristic of Byelorussians only. But gradually the name of Byelorussia was inseparably attached to the region we now know by that name. After the incorporation of the West Russian territories in the Muscovite Empire (in 1654 and 1667) Tsar Alexis Romanov was the first Tsar to style himself officially *Tsar of All Great, Little, and White Russia* (*vseja Velikija, i Malyja, i Belyja Rossii*).<sup>38</sup>

The opposition, or correlation, between Great Russia (*Velikaja Rossija*) and Little Russia (*Malaja Rossija*) goes back to a terminology evolved in the office of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch. The office was forced to distinguish the West Russian and the Muscovite Church. Galicia and Volhynia were comprised in the one (Greek) term of *Mikrā Rossia*, whereas all the rest was called *Megalē Rossia*. In this terminology there was as little discrimination as in the distinction made between *Polonia Major* and *Polonia Minor*, which were more or less equivalent to 'older Poland' and 'younger (later) Poland'. As we have seen, the terminology was adopted by the Muscovite Tsars in the XVIIth Century, while at the same time the

<sup>30</sup> Županić, p. 355ff.

<sup>31</sup> Vakar, p. 206ff.

<sup>32</sup> Smal-Stocky, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Il'jinskij, p. 393.

<sup>34</sup> Vakar, p. 203.

<sup>35</sup> Perwolf, p. 21. – Županić, p. 355ff. – Vakar, p. 202.

<sup>36</sup> Karskij, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> Max Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, p. 73.

<sup>38</sup> Perwolf, p. 22.

term *Malaja Rossija* or *Malorossija*, 'Little Russia', was gradually extended to include the entire area populated by the present Ukrainian people, and stretching from the Kharkov and Poltava districts east of the Dnieper to the territory, west of that river, which had been regained from Poland in the course of time.<sup>39</sup>

The population itself has always been disinclined to accept this name. The present name, *Ukraina*, is very late as a term indicating a definite political domain. It is true that the fact of its appearance in the *Hypatian Chronicle*, anno 1187, is generally argued in favor of the age-old existence of this name, but it is quite clear from the context where it appears in the *Chronicle*, and even more so from other contexts, that no such thing as a definite area or state was implied by this term.<sup>40</sup> Though from time immemorial the present Ukraine had been part of, and indeed the nucleus of, the original native home-land of the East Slavs, and though it was almost identical with the original state of *Rus'*, it was, by the irony of Fate, forced to give up the latter name. It was the powerfully rising Muscovite Empire which, through a policy of deliberately assembling the Russian peoples, increasingly annexed the name of *Russian* to denote the people which under its leadership was welded together into national unity. By the side of the Muscovite Empire stood long the Lithuanian Grand Duchy as a rivaling power, uniting the Byelorussian people and considerable parts of the people we now call Ukrainian under its sceptre, but making no claims to the name of *Rus'* or *Russia*. Other, more westerly parts of the Ukrainian people belonged to the Kingdom of Poland. The Ukrainians in consequence remained without a name essentially their own. From time to time certain parts of the country which they inhabited were given differing names, when there was a need for them. It was called *Rossia Minor*, *Malaja Rossija*, as we have seen. But under the rule of the so-called *Hetmans* the country on both sides of the river Dnieper, later only that on the eastern side, was called the *Hetman Country* (*Hetmanščyna*). In the heyday of the Cossacks it also bore the name of the *Cossack Country* (*Kozačyna*). All these names were more or less artificial and always temporary. Gradually the name of *Ukraina* triumphed over all rival terms. This name, too, was an artificial one.

It is difficult to settle precisely when this name was actually adopted as a term for the country now called by it. We have already seen above that it is misleading to refer to the places in the *Chronicle* where it occurs first, as the name used there is very far from having the meaning of the present name. Everything points to its meaning being in those times 'border country', 'periphery'.<sup>41</sup> Seen from the Muscovite-Russian as well from the Polish-Lithuanian point of view, it was actually a region lying in the periphery of those states at their south-western or south-eastern boundary. Only by slow degrees did the appellative change to a proper name. This conception seems to be corroborated by the history of the country. Strange and violent, invariably bloody, historical events had turned it, originally the core of Russia, into a peripheral nameless region, a border zone separating Poland-Lithuania

<sup>39</sup> Borščak, p. 171.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 174.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 173. — See also Oliver J. Frederiksen, p. 347.



and the Muscovite Empire on one hand from the steppe nomads, the Tatars, on the other. It has long been held that the Tatar invasion in the beginning of the XIIIth Century caused the country to be completely ravaged and laid waste, that it actually remained desolate for a long time, and that it was only gradually repopulated by the Russians advancing slowly from the Carpathians.<sup>42</sup> This theory has again been abandoned. The conclusion has been arrived at that north-eastern Russia was made to feel the full impact of the Tatar invasion rather than the Ukraine, and that the towns and their populations suffered more than the actual mass of peasants. The latter may even have had better conditions under the Tatars than under their own feudal princes who had been forced to take flight. It seems that the effect was far more violent when in 1482 Mengli Ghirey Khan and his Crimean Tatars broke into the country and ravaged it thoroughly. Not till the XVIth Century were the effects of this plundering raid tolerably remedied. The recurrent raids made by the Crimeans had shown signs of being on the wane, and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy to which the country belonged began a systematic recolonization of the country. An entirely new system of defence was constructed with lines of fortification in three parallel rings along the frontiers throughout the country.<sup>43</sup> This was the period in which the country is supposed to have taken its new name, *Ukraina*, as a definite name of the country.<sup>44</sup>

The name was thus probably formed with a prefix *u-* from the word *kraj* 'edge, border-line, territory between borders'. However, certain Ukrainian philologists<sup>45</sup> are not content with this interpretation, as it renders the origin of the word dependent on rather late historical events. They point out that in the folk songs *Ukraina* appears in the plural, meaning 'fields', and hence they conclude that *Ukraina* as a name for the country is an extended adaptation of an age-old agricultural unit. The word, then, should not mean 'border field', but 'a field bounded, or limited, on all sides'. As long as this interpretation is not borne out by authentic historical and lexical material its trustworthiness must, however, be doubted.<sup>46</sup> It is very characteristic that during the long centuries when the country found itself without a name, the Great Russians simply called the Ukrainians after their special characteristic, the tuft of hair hanging down on the clean-shaven crown (*xoxol*, plur. *xoxly*). The Ukrainians, on the other hand, either named their Great Russian neighbors *kacapy* (billy goats) after their long beard, or simply *moskali*, Muscovites. At any rate it seems a fact that the word *Ukraina*, which had long existed in folk songs, was not adopted as the official and generally recognized name till the beginning of the XIXth Century, by the romantic ukrainofil movement, above all by Ševčenko, the great Ukrainian national poet.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the article "Ukraina" in *Enciklopedičeskij Slovar'*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 633.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 634.

<sup>44</sup> Perwolf, p. 600.

<sup>45</sup> R. Smal-Stockyj, "Poxodženn'a j značenn'a nazvy *Ukraina*" in the American-Ukrainian newspaper *Svoboda*, March 22, 1950, and M(iecislaus) H(ayman), "Ukraine", *Slavonic Encyclopaedia*, New York 1949, p. 1325.

<sup>46</sup> Frederiksen.

<sup>47</sup> Borščak, p. 174.



## Chapter 4.

# RUSSIAN PAGANISM

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### 1.

Russian paganism has a past history covering several thousands of years. Nevertheless, it proved, up to the moment of the October Revolution, to be of a remarkable vitality. The fact that to-day it survives only in sayings and proverbs or vegetates as a remnant of the past is not, perhaps, so much a result of the systematic educational activity which has been going on among the Russian peasantry, as a consequence of the significant fact that the change in the 'thirties to collective and mechanized farming completely undermined and partly exterminated the thousand-year-old peasant community, with its ancient way of life, its customs,

its traditions, and its primitive ideas, left almost untouched by the earlier changes of history. For the sake of method it seems imperative to retain this social aspect to rightly understand how the pagan system of beliefs evolved in Russia. In its development it passed through several stages which can only be kept apart if their social basis is constantly kept in mind.

An astonishing attempt has been made to derive Russian paganism from an inherited Indo-European system of beliefs, which has been reconstructed mainly on the basis of Old Indian, Greek, and Roman religion.<sup>1</sup> According to this theory the Indo-European Supreme Deity, the *pater familias* of the family of gods, named *Dyāuṣ pitā* in Old Indian, *Diespiter* in Latin, and *Zeus patēr* in Greek, is supposed to be faintly discernible in the two Slavic words *db-nb* and *dbždžb* (*\*dus-dius*),<sup>2</sup> which would mean that also in Slavic prehistoric times one might presuppose the belief in a god of the heavens, or god of day. It has, however, been completely ignored that whereas the Indians, Romans, and Greeks have developed the conception of a personal god, this idea is nowhere to be found with the Slavs, least of all with the Russians. There is no trace of divinity connected with the above-mentioned words. The Indian conception of *Indra*, in reality just another hypostasis of the same Indo-European Supreme Deity, has been supposed to survive in the Slavic *jedrō* 'strong',<sup>3</sup> and the conclusion was subsequently drawn that this was an obscure indication that the Slavs knew, in a remote past, of the same god. Actually, an Old Russian text might be cited as mentioning a demon *Jadrej*,<sup>4</sup> but here again one would commit the error of assuming that the Indian god represented an Indo-European deity which, among the Slavs, had degenerated to a mere demon. As a matter of fact the Indian god must be rather regarded as a further development of a primitive conception of a demon, preserved among the Slavs and especially among the Russians. Admitting that the Slavic word *zor'a* simply means 'morning dawn, aurora' and nothing else, the adherents of the theory of an Indo-European heritage in Slavic mythology maintain that the word has now been stripped of its former divine connotation,<sup>5</sup> — a hypothesis for which there is no evidence whatsoever. It has been assumed, with an equal lack of support, that since the Indians worship a god *Agni*, whose name means 'fire', and since the Slavs attach certain mythological ideas to the fire, which is termed *\*ognb*, these ideas constitute the last blurred traces of an identical basic conception of a god called *Fire*.<sup>6</sup>

However alluring and brilliant such theories may appear at first sight, they rest on a romantic conception of the surmised Indo-European kinship as one characterized by fully developed ideological systems, the reduced remnants and survivals of which are believed to be traceable among later descendants from the

<sup>1</sup> Machek p. 48–65.

<sup>2</sup> André Vaillant, "Le nom slave de 'la pluie'", *Revue des Études Slaves*, Vol. VII, Paris 1927, p. 112–113.

<sup>3</sup> Machek, p. 51, and Jakobson, p. 1026.

<sup>4</sup> Niederle, p. 132, and Mansikka, p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> Machek, p. 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

oldest Indo-European people. Furthermore, they completely ignore any connection between the beliefs and the social structure of a people, and the changes in such beliefs being subject to changes in social structure.

## 2.

An entirely justified attempt has been made at a distinction between two mythological worlds, or two separate stages in the mythological views, one being called *demonological*, the other *theological*.<sup>7</sup> The former is regarded as primitive, the latter as being of a superior character. Until modern times only the former stage was represented among the Russians by the remains of a wide-spread world of primitive ideas. However, when speaking of a Russian demonology, the fact must always be kept in mind that this demonology rests on an earlier system which, under the influence of Christianity, has been given a new interpretation. Thanks to Christianity, the pagan Russian demons have undergone an intrinsic, though only partial, metamorphosis, having evolved from spirits, which were not entirely inimical powers. The oldest form of Russian paganism must be regarded as occupying a position between animism and animatism and reflecting a social community whose daily existence depended directly on Nature and the forces of Nature. Behind the last remains of this system we catch a glimpse of the type of community which found its natural religious expression in it. However, there is nothing in this paganism to indicate that the community in question was one of fishers and hunters. On the contrary, everything points to the conclusion that ancient Russian paganism was contingent on an agricultural population. It was emphatically a religion of the tillers of the soil.<sup>8</sup> The life of Russian peasantry revolved round the house, the yard, and the stable, and round the forest, the field, and the river, and the most important religious ideas and emotions were therefore connected with these essential elements in their daily life. Each of them was imagined to possess a "soul", and this soul acquired anthropomorphic features and an independent existence, though not at any time an individual personality, nor too distinct attributes. In this way arose the conception of house demons, yard demons, forest demons, field demons, and water demons. It is very characteristic that the corresponding names – *domovoj*, *dvorovoj*, *lesovoj* or *lešij*, *polevoj*, and *vod'anoj* – were simple adjective derivations from the words *dom* 'house', *dvor* 'yard', *les* 'forest', *pole* 'field', and *voda* 'water', presupposing implied nouns like *dux* 'spirit', and *bog* 'god'. Only at a later stage were the corresponding substantive forms derived from the adjectives, e.g. *domovik*, *dvorovik*, *lesovik*, *polevik*. A special demon, *xlevnik*, also came into existence, derived from the word *xlev* 'stable'.<sup>9</sup> In certain cases these masculine forms were coupled with corresponding feminine words, e.g. *domaxa* (or *doman'a*), *lesuxa*, or *vod'anica*, denoting female

<sup>7</sup> Niederle, p. 127, – Meriggi, p. 148.

<sup>8</sup> Aničkov, *Jazyčestvo i drev'naja Rus'*, *passim*. – Cf. Aničkov, "Poslednije raboty", *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> Niederle, p. 131–132, and Zelenin, p. 383–390.

parallels to the male demons.<sup>10</sup> In these demon names we have a distinct and vigorous, if primitive, demonological system, untouched by alien influence – except for the hostile Christian interpretation which was given it by the church. By studying the ways in which popular belief characterizes these demons, we find that each has been conceived as a master of its own domain. The house demon generally manifests himself as a master of the house, a venerable *pater* who bustles and rummages about the house at his own will, has his own dwelling-place there, and is kept in good humor by gifts. The same thing applies to the other spirits.<sup>11</sup>

Besides these essentially agricultural demons, however, we find others as well, of a less transparent nature, and of an origin which from a linguistic point of view is somewhat more obscure than that of the former. Here belongs first of all the conception of *mara*, whose name seems related to the Germ. *\*mara* (A.S. *mare*, cf. Eng. *night-mare*, O.N. *mara*, Germ. *mahr*).<sup>12</sup> Considering its Slavic derivations (Russ. *marit* 'enchant', *marevo* 'fata morgana', etc.) it was probably not a foreign loan-word.<sup>13</sup> This demon, whose name may also denote 'dream, vision, ghost' in general, has quite indistinguishable features, but appears to be practically a variant of the house demon, and has as such a feminine parallel in *maruxa*.<sup>14</sup> The Russian *kiki-mora* 'a mischievous house spirit who plays tricks on the inhabitants of the house', is believed to be linguistically related to *mara*.<sup>15</sup> Among the nature demons romping outside the walls of the house should be mentioned the female demons dwelling in rivers and called *beregini*, obviously a derivation from the word *bereg*; at the time when the appellation was formed, the word apparently did not yet stand exclusively for 'bank, shore', but also for 'hill, mountain', as the spirits in question were not only water nymphs but mountain nymphs as well, fairies in general.<sup>16</sup> The name, however, has subsequently been supplanted by the word *rusalka*, which is supposed to have direct connection with the Christian rose-festival, or *rosaria*.<sup>17</sup> In that case it would be an interesting example of the victory of paganism in Christian terminology. Rather than being regarded as purely nature demons, the Russian nymphs were conceived as the souls of drowned women or children. It is worth noting that the idea of nature demons is often crossed with that of dead ancestors, with the result that the cult of the former becomes a cult of ancestors.<sup>18</sup> Half demon and half soul of a dead person was the spirit called *nav*,<sup>19</sup> a word which must originally have

<sup>10</sup> Zelenin, *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Zelenin, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Zelenin, *ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>13</sup> A. G. Preobraženskij, *Etimologičeskij slovar' russkogo jazyka*, Vol. I, Moscow 1910–14, p. 509.  
– Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. II, Heidelberg 1954, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> Zelenin, p. 386.

<sup>15</sup> Zelenin, *ibid.* – Cf. Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1950, p. 556.

<sup>16</sup> Niederle, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> Miklosich, p. 386–405, and Unbegaun, p. 428.

<sup>18</sup> Aničkov, *Vesenn'aja obr'adovaja pesn'a*, p. 301–306, and Zelenin, p. 393.

<sup>19</sup> Niederle, p. 130.

meant 'a dead person'.<sup>20</sup> Two thoroughly evil and terrifying demons were *bes* and *čort*, which appeared in Russian peasant mythology, and whose etymology has not been entirely elucidated.<sup>21</sup> Only after the introduction of Christianity did they coincide with the conception of a devil as found in the Bible.

It would lead too far to continue this examination of the demonology among the Russian peasantry. What has been said will be sufficient to prove that we are actually here dealing with a mythology which sprang from an agricultural community, and which has continued its existence from pre-Christian times almost up to our day. Apparently it is the oldest mythological substratum we are able to arrive at. It seems to show no trace of any kind of totemism, otherwise almost a characteristic of clans or tribes, unless one would see a reminiscence of it in the pre-Christian custom of naming new-born children after animals, birds, and fish, and in such Russian family names as *Volkov*, *Kotov*, *Sokolov*, *Orlov*, *Ščukin* (from *volk* 'wolf', *kot* 'cat', *sokol* 'falcon', *or'ol* 'eagle', *ščuka* 'pike'). This question has not been sufficiently investigated.<sup>22</sup>

## 3.

The Slavic, especially Russian, theology conceived as a higher form beside the primitive demonology or animism,<sup>23</sup> has, contrary to the latter, left no trace whatever in the memory of the people. The reason for the eclipse of this higher form should undoubtedly be seen in the circumstance that it constituted a religious, or mythological, system which did not comprise the whole nation but only one class, a class which had risen above the peasantry. In this connection, it is worth noting that there seems to exist a close relationship, if not even identity, between Russian (or rather common Slavic) and (Indo-)Iranian mythological terminology. It has repeatedly been inferred from this that borrowed Iranian ideas are actually extant in the Russian (Proto-Slavic) conception of deities. Still, one should probably not argue such words as *bog* 'god', *div* 'evil demon', *sv'at* 'holy', and similar ones<sup>24</sup> in favor of such a relationship or identity, as it is reasonable to assume that the words in question (cf. Iran. *baga-* 'lord, god', *daēva-* 'evil spirit', *spēntos* 'powerful') have in reality undergone a parallel but independent development from a common Indo-European material.<sup>25</sup> Particular caution is required when dealing with the personal names of deities which have been passed down

<sup>20</sup> Preobraženskij, p. 588.

<sup>21</sup> Preobraženskij, p. I, p. 60, and P. III, p. 69, Berneker, *Slavisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1908-13, p. 56 and p. 172, and Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1950, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> Niederle, p. 135. - Laurov, p. 63-56.

<sup>23</sup> Niederle, p. 127.

<sup>24</sup> Jakobson.

<sup>25</sup> Helmut Arntz, *Sprachliche Beziehungen zwischen Arisch und Baltoslawisch*, Heidelberg 1933, p. 58ff. - Cf. Preobraženskij, P. I, p. 33 and 184, P. II, p. 265, - Berneker, p. 66 and 202, - and Vasmer, p. 98 and 350.

to us in various ways. It cannot be an insignificant fact that a Slavic Pantheon, representing distinct personal deities, is only known to a full extent in such districts as bordered on alien cultures with a highly developed system of gods. On this point we are chiefly concerned with the Baltic Slavs, who were in close contact with Northern culture, and with the Russians, who were in touch with the Oriental cultures and influenced by the Swedish *Rus'*-people and the later Varangians.<sup>26</sup> This does not imply that the cultural influence manifested itself in a direct adoption of foreign gods. It is much rather the case of certain primitive Slavic ideas having been made to conform with the foreign Pantheon.

The place as the Old Russian Supreme Deity has always been assigned to *Perun*, a godhead mentioned in the earliest Russian sources.<sup>27</sup> He is generally regarded as the god of thunder, not because he is characterized as such in our sources, but because this meaning *a posteriori* has been read into the name. For there can be no doubt whatever that the name is identical with the Old Russian (common Slavic) appellative *perun*, meaning, in the Slavic languages where it occurs, 'thunder, lightning',<sup>28</sup> and derived from the verb 'to strike'.<sup>29</sup> If this etymology is correct we are concerned with a godhead which has come into existence on purely Slavic (Russian) soil by the personification of a natural phenomenon. A similar personification has arisen among the Baltic Slavs, independently of the Russian one.<sup>30</sup> Such personifications probably took place at a moment when the Slavs felt the need for a term that would correspond to the name of a god known among some of their neighbors, whoever they were. There is reason to assume that the first Russian kings, or princes, of Scandinavian stock and their retinue of foreigners may, by their worship of Thor, have caused such a development to take place among the Slavs in Novgorod and Kiev.<sup>31</sup> It would be parallel with that of the Slavs on the Elbe which led them to call *Thursday* (in German *Donnerstag*) by a simple translation *perūn-dan*.<sup>32</sup> It can thus hardly be said that we have decisive proof of the existence at any time of an independent Slavic, or particularly Russian, godhead *Perun*. There are, however, other theories concerning the Slavo-Russian *Perun*, theories parallelizing this name with Lith. *Perkunas* 'god of thunder, thunder', Vedic *Parjanya*, Nordic *Fjörgynn*, and comparing it with words like Goth. *fairguni*, Slav. *\*pergyni* etc. These names and words are either mutually connected by supposing a wave of borrowings from Celtic (*\*perkunos*) over Germanic (*\*fergunaz/ferhunaz*) to Lithuanian (*perkunas*) and Slavic (*\*pergyni/perun*),<sup>33</sup> or by assuming that all these names and words are

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Meriggi, p. 148.

<sup>27</sup> Mansikka, p. 379.

<sup>28</sup> A. Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Cracow, p. 00.

<sup>29</sup> Preobraženskij, P. II, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup> Niederle, p. 139, and Mansikka, p. 384.

<sup>31</sup> Rożniecki, p. 462-520. - Cf. Meriggi, p. 150, and Schmaus, p. 214.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Rost, *Die Sprachreste der Dravāno-polaben im Hannöverschen*, Leipzig 1907, p. 33, 59, 102 and 174. - Cf. Meriggi, p. 150-151.

<sup>33</sup> Ad. Stender-Petersen, *Slavisch-germanische Lehnwortkunde*, Gothenburg 1927, p. 269.

mutually related derivations from an Indo-European root *\*per-/\*perk-: \*perg-*.<sup>34</sup> I must admit that I am very skeptical regarding these highly complicated theories, which linguistically involve great difficulties, and incline towards the view that the Russians had a word for 'thunder, lightning', but no real god of thunder and lightning.<sup>35</sup> This god came into existence in a more or less artificial way when the Eastern Slavs needed a name which would cover the war-god *Thor*, worshipped by their originally Scandinavian princes. The agricultural Slavic population itself had no such god as would presuppose the existence of a strong military organization. Whenever such a god, *Perun*, is mentioned in the earliest Russian sources, e.g. in the first peace treaties with the Greeks, the name should be taken as a literary equivalent of the Nordic god, who was a typical god of thunder and lightning.

Besides *Perun* the Old Russian sources also contain the name of *Veles/Volos*, by which oaths were taken. This was a special god of cattle (*skotij bog*).<sup>36</sup> It would be tempting to suggest that the alternation of these two names should be regarded in the same way as that of *velet/volot* 'a giant', which may have been originally an ethnic name, but unfortunately the latter alternation is also difficult to explain.<sup>37</sup> It has been assumed, tentatively, that the Proto-Slavic basic form of the deity's name was *\*Velsa*, which name was then boldly interpreted as a metathetic development from a still older *\*Selv* and associated with the Iranian name of a deity, *Sarva*.<sup>38</sup> In this way it seemed possible to get another proof of a supposed Slavo-Iranian mythological kinship. This experiment can, however, hardly be considered as successful or convincing. In the most reliable Old Russian source in which the name of this deity occurs, viz. one of the Greek-Russian peace treaties,<sup>39</sup> we only come across the form *Volos*. Curiously enough, it has never hitherto been felt as an incongruity that this deity, which in the context appears to be classed with the god of war, *Perun*, mentioned in the same place, should have been characterized expressly as a 'god of cattle', but not as a god of war.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, it strikes one as rather conspicuous that this deity does not appear at all among the number of deities mentioned in the *Nestor-Chronicle* in connection with King Vladimir's pagan propaganda previous to the conversion.<sup>41</sup> These peculiarities make it probable that the god *Volos* must be excluded from the number of surmised Russian gods. And so the theory gains in probability which takes it for granted that behind *Volos skotij bog* we should in reality see

<sup>34</sup> Jakobson, p. 1026. – Cf. Meriggi, p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> Brückner, "Mythologische Thesen", p. 16.

<sup>36</sup> Mansikka, p. 386. – Cf. Schmaus, p. 216.

<sup>37</sup> Vasmer, I. p. 180.

<sup>38</sup> Machek, p. 62–63.

<sup>39</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, Part. I, Moscow-Leningrad 1950, p. 25 and 52.

<sup>40</sup> I find it difficult to accept Unbegaun's conjecture that the expression *skotij bog* should mean 'god of opulence and wealth', p. 402. The adjective *skotij* by its derivation neces sarily presupposes animals.

<sup>41</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 56. – Cf. Meriggi, p. 152.



the *Holy Vlas*, the patron of cattle (in Greek *bukolos*). The Greek name of *Vlasios* (= *Blasius*), in Slavic pronounced *Vlas*, was, owing to the Russian pleophony, automatically changed into *Volos*,<sup>42</sup> according to the alternation Old Church Slavic *vlas* /Russian *volos* 'hair'. His appearance in the peace treaty by the side of the war-god *Perun*, who corresponded to *Thor*, the Supreme Deity of the Scandinavian retinue, must be explained by the circumstance that a god had to be found, by whom the pagan Slavs in the retinue, who were recruited from among the peasantry, could swear their oaths. So they took refuge in the paganized *St. Blasius* (= *Vlasios*), who, being the patron of the cattle, had naturally enough gained wide-spread popularity among the Slavs. The sound-form *Veles*, which recurs only in the *Lay of Prince Igor* and in the apocryphal poem of Byzantine origin, *The Progress of the Mother of God through Torments*, should under these circumstances no doubt be interpreted as the result of learned-poetical speculations.<sup>43</sup>

In King Vladimir's Pantheon of gods we also miss the god *Svarog*, who nevertheless came to play a part of considerable importance in mythological speculation.<sup>44</sup> As a matter of fact this name did not appear till the year 1362, when a Russian translator smuggled it into his translation of Malalas' *Byzantine Chronicle*, whence the name passed into the *Russian Annals* (*Codex Hypatianus* and *Codex Chlebnikovius*).<sup>45</sup> In the same passage the translator in his interpretation informs us that the Egyptian *Hephaistos* (corrupted into *Feost*) is identical with *Svarog*, and his son *Helios* (in Russian called 'Sun') identical with *Dažbog*. If we had no other evidence than this interpolation, which strikes one as being decidedly fabricated, we should have been justified in regarding these names as "blosse leere Namen".<sup>46</sup> But we have other, if rather confused, Old Russian information<sup>47</sup> concerning the name *Svarog* or its derivative, the patronymic *Svarožič*, as a term for 'fire'. And the consequence then seems to be that the Russians knew either of a god of sun and fire, or at least of a myth, maybe of non-Slavic origin, to the effect that the fire and the sun came into being as sons of a mysterious *Svarog*.<sup>48</sup> The attempts at an etymological explanation of this name are legion. The most inspired of these assumes that the name derives from an Indo-European *\*svōrogos*, related to the Indian epithet of a deity, *svarāj-* 'self-governing, independent'.<sup>49</sup> If this etymology is correct, we should have found in this name a faint connection with Indo-Iranian mythology. Incidentally, it is worth noting that the name *Svarog* seems to appear in many variants among the Western Slavs, now as

<sup>42</sup> Mansikka, p. 388-389.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 392-393. - Cf. Meriggi, p. 153-155.

<sup>44</sup> Jakobson, p. 1026. - Cf. Schmaus, p. 215.

<sup>45</sup> Mansikka, p. 396.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 397.

<sup>49</sup> Machek, p. 60.



*Tvarog*,<sup>50</sup> now as *Rarog*, *Jarog*, etc.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps the name belongs to the great number of Slavic nomina formed with the, as it seems, still unexplained suffix *-ogъ* (*črtogъ*, *ostrogъ*, *sapogъ*, *batogъ*, *stapogъ*, etc.).<sup>52</sup>

It might be tempting to regard as a similar formation with *-ogъ* the name *Stribogъ*, which, contrary to *Svarog*, has been included by the *Nestor-Chronicle* in King Vladimir's list of pagan gods,<sup>53</sup> were it not evident that the word must be taken as a compound with *bog*. Numerous attempts have been made to explain this name from Slavic etyma without arriving at a really convincing result.<sup>54</sup> But it appears reasonable to assume, as in the case of *Svarog*, an Indo-Iranian influence behind this name too. Against this background it seems extremely convincing to trace the name back to a divine epithet, or taboo-name, *\*Sribaga-* 'god of light', in Iranian. *Stribog* seems to have been, in the main, a learned term without any real religious importance, and we are not surprised to find, in the *Lay of Prince Igor*, that the winds are called the sons, or grandsons, of this deity.<sup>55</sup>

Such is probably also the origin of the name *Xors*, mentioned in the list of gods in the *Nestor-Chronicle*<sup>56</sup> as well as in the *Lay of Prince Igor*<sup>57</sup>, and traditionally compared with an Iranian solar term, Pers. *Xursid*.<sup>58</sup> Presumably there is also behind the name of the god *Dažbog*, attested by both the *Nestor-Chronicle*<sup>59</sup> and the *Lay of Prince Igor*,<sup>60</sup> an Iranian term for a deity, a divine epithet for the Supreme God, meaning 'creator' (*Dadušō* gen.),<sup>61</sup> on Slavic soil transformed into meaning 'giver'. The puzzling name of *Simargl*, which also appears in the list of gods in the *Nestor-Chronicle*<sup>62</sup>, seems to be of Iranian origin, too, derived from the Iranian stem *sima-* 'terrifying',<sup>63</sup> and the winged Iranian demon *Simorg* has been pointed out, and rightly it seems, as its immediate prototype.<sup>64</sup> But when confronted with the last deity among the number of pagan gods ascribed to St. Vladimir and included in the *Nestor-Chronicle*, we stand completely helpless. This time, apparently, we are concerned with a female deity, called *Mokoš*.<sup>65</sup> Scholars

<sup>50</sup> Jakobson, p. 1026. – Cf. Jan Peisker, "Koje su vjere bili stari Sloveni prije krštenja", *Starohrvatske Prosvjete*, Vol. II, Zagreb 1928, p. 1–36, and "Tvarog, Jungfernsprung and Verwandtes", *Blätter für Heimatkunde*, Graz 1926, Vol. IV, p. 49–57.

<sup>51</sup> Jakobson, p. 1026.

<sup>52</sup> F. Miklosich, *Vergleichende Stammbildungslehre der slavischen Sprachen*, Vienna 1875, p. 283, and W. Vondrák, *Vergleichende slavische Grammatik*, Vol. I, 2nd ed., Göttingen 1924, p. 629.

<sup>53</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 56.

<sup>54</sup> S. Pirchegger, "Zum altrussischen Götternamen *Stribog*", *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie*, Vol. XIX, p. 311–316. – Cf. Schmaus, p. 218.

<sup>55</sup> *La Geste du prince Igor*, New York 1948, p. 46. – Cf. Jakobson, p. 1027.

<sup>56</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> *La Geste du prince Igor*, p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> Jakobson, p. 1027. – Cf. Schmaus, p. 218.

<sup>59</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 56.

<sup>60</sup> *La Geste du prince Igor*, p. 50 and 53.

<sup>61</sup> Pirchegger, p. 315.

<sup>62</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 56.

<sup>63</sup> Chr. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Strassburg 1904, p. 1580.

<sup>64</sup> Jakobson, p. 1027.

<sup>65</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 56. – Cf. Meriggi, p. 157–158.

have, however, not been able to cite any homophonous Iranian prototype for this name, and so they attempt to explain it on the basis of the Slavic stem *mok-* 'moist', at the same time reminding us of the Iranian *Ardvī* ('moisture') *Sūrā Anāhitā*, who 'protects seamen, childbearing, and sheep-breeding', and the conception in Russian folklore of *Mat' syra zeml'a* 'Mother moist Earth'.<sup>66</sup> All this is, however, highly uncertain and dubious. And in view of the result arrived at, viz. that the Pantheon of gods we are here concerned with originally consisted of only one god, namely *Perun*, whereas all the others are due to later interpolation, it seems a plausible supposition that the interpolation, rather than reflecting a living belief in the gods, is the result of pure speculation in a writer who was familiar with Iranian religious conceptions. These Iranian conceptions cannot possibly have penetrated far into the people, but had their proper sphere within the Old Russian merchant class, which had old contacts with the Iranian peoples, especially with those south of the Caspian Sea.

It must then follow from these reflections that we can only take for granted, with any certainty, the existence of a rather primitive system of demons, founded on animistic views, and resting, since the earliest times, on the conceptions of Nature which were inherent in the Russian peasantry and corresponded to the structure of a thousand-year-old agricultural community. This animism was so completely adequate to the requirements of the daily life of the Russian peasantry, and so perfectly covered its mental sphere that Christianity was not able to overcome and supplant it, only to modify it in a purely formal and superficial way towards an inimical world of demons. Through the foundation of the Russian state and the creation of a class of warriors there arose a need for something more besides animism, for personified gods after the fashion of other peoples' gods, such gods as oaths could be sworn by. At this time the Russian *Perun* must have come into existence as a Slavic term for *Thor*, the god of the Varangians or the *Rus'*-people, by means of a rather mechanical importation of Nordic ideas to Slavic soil. There is no reason to believe that this god ever found his way outside the narrow boundaries of his caste. In a similar, more or less artificial, way a farming- and cattle-god was created for the Slavo-Russian population by paganizing a Byzantine saint, who had very early become popular as an object for worship among the East Slavic tillers of the soil. There is no foundation whatever for believing that the god *Volos* should reflect ancient Slavic conceptions of deities. As regards the rest of the pre-Christian gods mentioned in our sources, it seems methodically correct to associate the majority of them, directly or indirectly, with certain Iranian names of deities. But it must not be inferred from this that these names represent an actual belief in the gods, a theology. It is far more likely that they have only led a purely literary existence or reflect the knowledge of Iranian religion, characteristic of a strictly limited social class.

<sup>66</sup> A. A. Šaxmatov, *Razyskanija o drevnejšix russkix letopisnyx svodax*, St. Petersburg 1908, p. 139, and 555, and Rožniecki, p. 504.

## Chapter 5

# RUSSIAN CHRISTIANISM

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## 1

The Russian people's official acceptance of Christianity followed almost immediately upon a period of fervid propaganda in favor of a comparatively highly developed pagan religion with temples, idols, and regular human sacrifices. From the *Nestor Chronicle* it appears that in 980 King Vladimir established his famous Pantheon of gods in Kiev and Novgorod,<sup>1</sup> but only 8 years later, in 988, he had every idol demolished, whereupon the Russian people was more or less forcibly Christianized, in Kiev as well as in Novgorod.<sup>2</sup> The pagan theology, which was permeated by Varangian and Iranian elements, can be said never to have pene-

<sup>1</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, ed. by D. S. Lixačov, Vol. I, Moscow-Leningrad 1950, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

trated deep into the Russian peasant mentality, but the same thing, strangely enough, applies to Christianity, though the latter had centuries at its disposal.

It is doubtful whether Christianity as a religion ever became the spiritual property of the Russian people. At least in the Ancient Russia of the pre-Mongol period the mass of the population had not the time to assimilate anything – neither the external form, nor the inner meaning of the Christian faith.<sup>3</sup> From the very outset the form and content of Christianity were moulded by the basic religious ideas which were characteristic of the Russian peasantry from the earliest times. This pagan peasant society, whose whole religion, as we have seen in the previous chapter, had been a more or less pronounced animism, had followed the ideological principles inherent in its agrarian mode of life in developing a series of magical-ritual exorcisms, suitable for appeasing and turning to account the nature and home demons which populated the surroundings. It was eventually from such a primitive magical-ritual attitude to the invisible world that the newly imported Christian faith was conceived, accepted, and interpreted. At the time when Christianity was introduced the mass of the population was as yet simply incapable of a spiritual conception of Christianity, and any higher form of mystical experience of God was completely alien to it. This attitude, in fact, became decisive for the course of the development of Christianity during the early centuries of Russian history.

Unofficially, Christianity had seeped into Russia long before the mass conversion. As early as under Queen Olga, King Vladimir's grandmother, Christian churches and houses of worship were founded in Kiev,<sup>4</sup> and the Queen herself received baptism in Constantinople in 955.<sup>5</sup> It was thus the Eastern or Byzantine variant of Christianity which was introduced into Ancient Russia. Not the preaching of the Gospel, but rather the ritual of the service became of paramount importance. It is very characteristic that at the return of the Russian envoys who had been sent out to study the Volga-Bulgarian, the Catholic, and the Byzantine cults, they reported to their king that the Byzantine service surpassed the others by far in beauty and splendor.<sup>6</sup> It was obviously the ritual element which proved to determine the choice of creed, not a possible content of thought. Of course, the conversion to Christianity meant that in pagan Russian were "established pure types of oriental monasticism, hermetical life, reclusion, imitation of Simeon Stylites (the famous Syrian ascetic of the fifth century who was reputed to have spent many years on top of a pillar), and many other varieties of corporal self-torture."<sup>7</sup> But it was extremely characteristic of these early Christians that they did not look upon the temptations they strove to overcome as the results of an eternal battle between the good and evil forces in man, but rather as a consequence

<sup>3</sup> Golubinskij quoted by Miliukov, p. 7. – Cf. *Istorija SSSR*, Vol. I, Moscow 1939, p. 99. Moscow 1939, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Istorija SSSR*, Vol. I, p. 89–99, – Lavrov, p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> *Povest' vremennyx let*, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Miliukov, p. 3.

of the revenge inflicted by the ancient demons on the person who deserted them for the sake of the Christian God. "The struggle was great for an ascetic resolved to overcome the temptations, for, only yesterday a pagan, he could not at once free himself of the old beliefs, and in his imagination the natural desires became snares laid for him by the evil force. The demons were to him ancient pagan deities, provoked at the young generation and resolved to avenge themselves for the betrayal of the old religion."<sup>8</sup> This point of view remained characteristic of the Christian peasantry in Russia throughout centuries.

The large-scale propaganda in favor of Christianity which was carried out in Ancient Russia immediately after the conversion, had actually every chance of calling forth a religious revival in the name of Christ.<sup>9</sup> If this end was not attained it was largely due to the fact that the propaganda was confined to the towns and rarely reached the masses of the Russian people. The church homily or sermon played a minor role in devotional life and either bore the stamp of extreme practical and moral formalism, expressed in simple tenets concerning true ascetism and true good works, or else was of an equally extreme type of rhetoric, intelligible only to a select audience, and seldom penetrated into the primitive mind. The only attempt at what may be termed religious poetry in the twelfth century is found in the famous Cyril of Turov, who composed a great number of prayers. They were written in *I*-form, but this *I*, speaking in them to God, was not that of the composer, but that of any reader, and the nature of the confession was kept in such general terms as to make it possible for any reader to identify himself with the *I* of the poem.<sup>10</sup> Byzantine Orthodoxy was by nature anti-individualistic and did not encourage individual meditation or experience. From the very outset the Russian people was confronted with a church that was complete and admitted of no further development, a church which in its very impersonality represented the tradition of eternal truth as something inviolate and immutable, itself being authoritative and autocratic in immutability.

Already at the time of its introduction into Russia the Byzantine Church differed considerably from Western European religious conceptions, even though the great Schism had not yet taken place between Catholicism and Orthodoxy. If the Pope was the supreme authority of the Catholic Church, the Byzantine Orthodoxy saw the corresponding highest authority in the collective body of the Church. The religious system of the Byzantine Church rested on two fundamental ideas which were both expressed in liturgical forms of a purely magic nature. One was the purifying power of baptism and the miraculous effect of the baptismal rites. Baptism was not so much conceived as a symbolic act, but rather as an entirely material process, which by means of a kind of exorcism purified the baptized person from the original sin and squalor of this life on earth. The Church was assumed to possess certain means by which man could gain immortality, and one of them

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Lavrov, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Ad. Stender-Petersen, *Den russiske litteraturs historie*, Copenhagen 1952, Vol. I, p. 44.

was baptism. This divine purification was transmitted to the water in which the person was to be baptized, as the sign of the cross expelled Satan from the water, and the priest's breathing on the water invested it with the Holy Spirit which he had himself received from his bishop. Finally the child was submerged completely in the water three times.<sup>11</sup> This solidly material conception of baptism as an actual material purification caused the ceremony of baptism to appear as an act of pure magic.

The other basic idea which furthered the magical, anti-symbolic conception to an even greater extent was the sacrament of the Eucharist. It was understood less as a symbolic meal of commemoration than as a real *pharmakos tēs athanasiās*, a veritable remedy against death.<sup>12</sup> One literally ate the body of God and literally drank His blood, and the transubstantiation of bread and wine, enacted before everybody in the church, was a mystery play which was taken quite literally. Divine service was a liturgical magic act, the single components of which had been fixed into a set form once for all, and the effect of which depended upon the very unchangeableness of the elements employed. The sermon never occupied a prominent place in this liturgy; it was purely instructive and was confined to the recounting of simple legends of saints in which the stress was laid on the miraculous element. A learned theology was almost regarded as a presumption, as the possibility of a historical development of dogma was rejected. Religion was "a set form of prayer formulas possessing a magic meaning."<sup>13</sup> Everything was firmly settled and established from the very beginning, and the lay church-goer was exempted from any form of individual thought or meditation. And this contributed to the rise of an extremely conservative formalism, while, at the same time, old pagan ideas continued to exist in a curious symbiosis with Christianity, called "double faith" (*dvojeverije*).

## 2.

But it also contributed to the frequent rising of heretical movements, aiming at infusing the rigid form with new life. One of the earliest heretical movements to penetrate into newly Christianized Russia was the so-called *Bogomil* sect, a dualistic heresy which had its roots in the earlier Manichaean, Paulician, and Massalian religious movements.<sup>14</sup> Evolved in the Xth and XIth Centuries in Bulgaria and ascribed to the two priests, Bogomil and Jeremiah, it found new nourishment in the soil prepared in Russia by the above mentioned "double faith" and blend of Christian and pagan conceptions and ideas. The Apocrypha to which it gave rise mingled with other prohibited writings and were violently but ineffectually opposed by the Church. The dualistic conception of the spiritual world, the

<sup>11</sup> Briem, p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> Miliukov, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> N. K. Gudzy, *History of Early Russian Literature*, translated by S. W. Jones, New York 1949, p. 36. — Cf. Ad. Stender-Petersen, Vol. I, p. 22.

contrasting of two co-equal powers, God and Satan, appealed by its simple clarity to every mind in search of an answer to the mysteries of existence. Mysticism and rationalism flourished side by side in this heretical world of thought. If this trend found its proper sphere among the peasantry at the time of Russian feudalism, the towns with their citizenry and guilds of artisans and merchants should probably be indicated as the sphere where, since the fourteenth century far more strongly rationalistic doctrines began to make themselves felt. In the fourteenth century a heretical movement arose in Pskov which was called, after its initiator, the *cloth-cutter sect*.<sup>15</sup> It soon spread to Novgorod and sought to establish its own church organization. This movement, which is probably directly connected with Western European reformatory tendencies, was of a protestant and Puritan character. Despite violent persecution from the Church, it continued far into the fifteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Though suppressed about 1427 it was revived among the so-called *Judaizers*, a sect which was formed towards the end of the fifteenth century, according to certain sources through direct propaganda spread by Schoria, a Jew from Kiev, who moved to Novgorod in 1471. This sect, also, was of a definite rationalistic character and was surprisingly radical in its negative attitude towards the Gospel and the general Christian doctrines. The Archbishop Gennadius of Novgorod found it necessary to convoke several councils (1488, 1491) in his campaign against this sect, and when at length it seemed to have been almost suppressed in Novgorod by typical Western European measures of Inquisition (including auto-da-fé), it cropped up in Moscow and found patrons even at the Tsar's Court. Only the council of 1504 was able to exterminate this sect completely.<sup>17</sup>

Both the sects mentioned above had principally found support among the middle classes, artisans, merchants, and similar professions, as well as among the lower clergy.<sup>18</sup> Quite distinct from them was a mystical-hesychastic spiritual trend, which had originated among the monks of the trans-Volga monasteries, the so-called *trans-Volga Fathers* (*zavolžskije starcy*), and found determined support among the wealthy boyars and great landowners, who were dissatisfied with the growing secular power of the Church and the tremendous accumulation of capital in the monasteries. The most prominent figure in this spiritual movement, which had its ultimate origin in Byzantium, was Nilus (Nil Sorskij, 1433–1508), formerly an Athos-monk, who zealously propagated absolute ascetism among the monks in the monasteries, opposed the secular power and worldly riches of the Church, and demanded sound criticism applied to the corrupted text of the Bible. At last it became necessary to convoke several church councils in order to arrive at a solution of the conflict, it being practically decided beforehand that the victory should fall to the hierarchic party which gave its energetic support to the auto-

<sup>15</sup> The Russian term is *strigol'niki*, which is interpreted both as 'cloth-cutters' and as 'tonsure-cutters'. Cf. *Istorija SSSR*, Vol. I, p. 218.

<sup>16</sup> See the article "Strigol'niki", p. 796–798.

<sup>17</sup> See the article "Židovstvujuščaja jeres'", p. 943–945.

<sup>18</sup> Ad. Stender-Petersen, Vol. I, p. 122.



cratic and monarchic wishes of the dynasty and surrounded it with the Supreme Grace of God.<sup>19</sup>

If conservatism had triumphed in this round, it was nevertheless evident that the time would come when a spiritual reform would become inevitable. It did come, eventually, and characteristically enough from above. Actually it was the establishment of a Tsarist printing press in Moscow which set the stone rolling in clerical matters.<sup>20</sup> The arrogant Old Muscovite legend of Moscow as the *Third Rome* and the theory of the purity and infallibility of Russian Orthodoxy had long been undermined by a sneaking suspicion that something was wrong with the wording of the sacred books. In view of the Russian religious literalism and the principle of the inviolability of dogma this suspicion was doubly disturbing. The Greek Patriarchs and other oriental primates, who after the fall of Constantinople (1453) had acquired the habit of personally seeking financial subvention in Moscow, were often surprised to find that even the ritual and divine service in this place deviated from the true traditional norm. Not only ecclesiastical textbooks and liturgical writings, but even the Old and New Testaments had gradually been badly corrupted and distorted through centuries of uncontrolled translation, transcription, and recopying.<sup>21</sup> The necessity for a close collation with the Greek original manuscripts had long been evident to the most enlightened among the clergy, but a sad lack of familiarity with the Greek language (in itself an indication of the fact that the Byzantine bond had burst asunder) and a terror lest the Turkish contamination should have polluted the purity of the Greek Church had hitherto prevented a general philological revision of the books.<sup>22</sup> But now confronted with a measure of such revolutionary consequences as the printing of the ecclesiastical texts it was impossible to avoid a revision any longer. It was the Patriarch Nikon (1605-81) who initiated this tremendous undertaking. By his energetic and ruthless manner of carrying out the revision he roused a veritable cultural storm in the entire country. The storm caused a profound schism to take place between official Orthodoxy, which supported the revision, and the so-called *Oldbelievers*, who opposed any alteration of text or rite.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.

The schism stirred up the masses profoundly and during the following centuries proved the vital point in their religious life. Though the opposition against church reform had sprung from an obstinate belief in the purely magic import of the Holy Scriptures and rites and was thus characterized by extreme formalism and literalism in the conception of religion, the schism did nevertheless contribute

<sup>19</sup> A. N. Pypin, *Istorija russkoj literatury*, Vol. II, St. Petersburg 1911, Chapter III, p. 42-91.

<sup>20</sup> Conybeare, p. 36. - Cf. Miliukov, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Conybeare, p. 31 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Conybeare, p. 39 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Conybeare, p. 41, and Miliukov, p. 36 ff.



a certain amount of spiritual stir to religious life. The starting point for both parties was mainly a ritualistic one. On receiving a letter from Tsar Alexis and the Patriarch Nikon in 1646 the Patriarch Paisius of Constantinople was highly surprised to perceive the role which ritual played to the Russians and warned them against such an adherence to *unessential rites*, but his warning was in vain.<sup>24</sup> Actually the rites (e.g. the question whether the sign of the cross should be made with two or three fingers, whether *Hallelujah* should be performed two or three times, whether the name of Jesus Christ should be pronounced *Isus* or *Iisus*, whether ecclesiastical processions should move with or against the sun),<sup>25</sup> formed the basis on which the difference of opinion originally arose. In spite of this formalism the schism was destined to cause a certain sublimation of religious life, notably among the *Oldbelievers*. It was something of a paradox that though the established Church had originally stood for reformatory zeal and consequently for progress, while the opposition had been conservative in the extreme, the position was reversed in a singular manner during the following centuries. Now it was the established Church which through its doctrine of the inviolability of dogma and the material efficacy of the sacraments became stagnate in Orthodox immutability and even exempted the individual believer from any form of personal spiritual activity, whereas the *Schismatics* or *Oldbelievers* shifted all religious responsibility on to the individual soul and insisted on religious experience.

The Schism took place in the years 1666–67 when a Church Council, convoked in Moscow, anathematized the opponents of scriptural reforms.<sup>26</sup> The Schismatics were rather perplexed by this situation and very soon split into different groups. The members of the moderate group were called *Priestists* (*popovščina*),<sup>27</sup> because they held that a clergy capable of celebrating divine service and administering the sacraments must be retained at all costs, even when the established Church had been deprived of its authority and Apostolic tradition, thanks to Nikon's reform and the introduction of the ungodly books. As long as there were priests ordained before the reform, all was well, but as such priests gradually died out, the problem of how to provide new priests became acute. It was solved in different ways. Some congregations accepted newly ordained priests, provided they declared that they renounced Nikonianism. Others contented themselves with proxies without calling in priests from the official Church. Some congregations appointed priests from across the Russo-Austrian border. These groups agreed in believing it possible to dispense with a hierarchy of their own, headed by a bishop. On account of their moderate attitude these Oldbelievers, mainly concentrated in the central parts of Russia, had little power of resistance against the established Church.

Far more radical was the movement which denied the necessity of a priesthood and so was called *Priestless* (*bespopovščina*).<sup>28</sup> The fundamental doctrine of this

<sup>24</sup> Conybeare, p. 45–50, and Miliukov, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Conybeare, p. 27–30.

<sup>26</sup> Conybeare, p. 65, and Miliukov, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> Xranevič, p. 555–556, and Miliukov, p. 40ff.

<sup>28</sup> Conybeare, p. 151 ff, and Miliukov, p. 56ff.

group was that the age of Antichrist, prophesied in the Apocalypse, had commenced with Nikon's reform and that true Orthodoxy, in its essence, was lost. Consequently there could be neither church nor priesthood, neither baptism nor marriage. Only a personal relationship to God was possible, and it found expression in prayer.<sup>29</sup> In the course of time, however, there developed within this Schismatic movement many other trends, all of them meeting in different ways the questions of a practical religious nature which arose from time to time. As a rule, when a Schismatic congregation under the influence of one of its teachers of faith made too far-reaching concessions to the established Church, an irreconcilable counter-movement would arise in protest, organized under a new teacher. It was characteristic of all these Priestless trends that from a medieval expectation of the Advent of Christ they went in for wholesale suicide by self-conflagration, by drowning, and by starvation.

When in 1835, on governmental request, a classification of sectarian movements in Russia was undertaken, the latter were divided into three groups: (1) the harmless, (2) the harmful, and (3) the exceedingly harmful. To the first category belonged the Priestists, to the second a Priestless movement which recognized the sacrament of marriage, to the third, one which denied the sacrament of marriage. Those were the three main trends within the Schism. But in the exceedingly harmful group were further included a great number of sects which had, strictly speaking, no connection with Nikon's reform in the XVIIth Century.

At the head of this list was placed a sect which, owing to the lack of a better term rather than to the existence of an actual historical connection, was called *Judaizers*.<sup>30</sup> It appeared at the end of the XVIIth Century and obviously had its roots in the *Foreign suburb* of Moscow. A small group of religiously interested people, who felt deeply dissatisfied with the formalistic attitude of the Russian Church in all questions of dogma, had here rallied round the distinctive figure of Demetrius Tveritinov, a man who began to propagate his own evangelical teaching, armed with hundreds of biblical quotations and a Russian translation of Luther's catechism printed in Sweden.<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly he was strongly influenced by his German friends' Protestantism, but had more radical views than they. He denied the authority of Church tradition and demanded a return to original Christianity. He did not recognize clerical hierarchy and preached the re-establishment of a personal relationship between man and God without any intermediary. He did not recognize the material significance of baptism or the Eucharist, but attributed to them a purely spiritual function. Nor did he recognize icons, crosses, and other symbols or their magic effect. But the most interesting point, which also reveals his independence of Protestantism, is the circumstance that he followed the doctrine of the Orthodox Church in preaching salvation through works, not by faith alone.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Vasilenko, p. 292.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 298.

<sup>31</sup> See the article "Tveritinov", 708-709, and Miliukov, p. 84-85.

<sup>32</sup> Miliukov, p. 86-87.

There seems to be a genetic-historical connection between the Evangelical sect described above and the Ukrainian *Dukhobor* sect, which appeared in the second half of the XVIIIth Century. According to some sources it had its ultimate origin in Quakerism as preached in the 1740s by an unknown itinerant Prussian teacher. The tenets of the Dukhobors, propagated by means of *the living word* (the written word being regarded as dead) were originally formulated (1750–75) by the learned peasant Silvan Kolesnikov, a man who was familiar with the writings of Eckartshausen and Saint-Martin. The peculiar Ukrainian philosopher Grigorij (Hryhory) Skovoroda (1722–94)<sup>33</sup> also contributed to the formulation of the tenets of the sect, which for the most part consisted in the denial of any kind of materialization of Christianity, rejected Church, marriage, the taking of oaths, the adoration of saints, and stressed the principle of brotherhood. The movement was a clearly rationalistic and spiritual type of interpretation of Christianity, entirely independent of Orthodox tradition with its fossilized dogma.<sup>34</sup> As the Dukhobors were continually being hampered by the Russian police a number of them (about 7000) emigrated to Canada at the beginning of the XXth Century, where their doctrine degenerated into a kind of theocratic anarchism.<sup>35</sup>

By an intermixture of the Dukhobor sect with the Evangelical sect in the second half of the XVIIIth Century a new rationalistic sect was formed, named in 1765, by the clerical Consistory in Tambow, the *Molokans*, probably because its followers did not abstain from milk and milk foods during Lent. The founder of the sect was a Tambov peasant Simon Uklein, originally a Dukhobor, but under the influence of the doctrine of the Tveritinov party he formulated his own creed and at the head of 70 *Apostles* he marched into the town of Tambov singing hymns. Though sprung from the demand for a personal relationship to the Gospel and the right to interpret the word of the Scripture in accordance with "the inner voice" this movement also degenerated in mystical and eschatological direction while simultaneously splitting up into many separate movements and deteriorating into faith in miracles and worship of its leaders as new incarnations of Christ.<sup>36</sup> In the 1860s the Molokan movement was recruited from the German colonists' Mennonite movement in Bessarabia and Ekaterinoslav, called *Stunde*, and adopted all the characteristics of Anabaptism. This rationalistic-evangelical movement spread like wildfire amongst the South Russian and Ukrainian populations.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.

All the sectarian movements hitherto described agreed in having a chiefly rationalistic attitude towards Christianity, and though quite often they developed

<sup>33</sup> Dmytro Čyževskyj, *Fil'osofija H. S. Skovorody*, Warsaw 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Barsov, p. 251–253, and Miliukov, p. 93.

<sup>35</sup> See the article "Dukhobors" in *Slavonic Encyclopaedia*, p. 244.

<sup>36</sup> Barsov, p. 644–646, Miliukov, 100 and the article "Molokani" in *Slavonic Encyclopaedia*, p. 818.

<sup>37</sup> Miliukov, p. 105ff.

towards mysticism, yet they had originated in the desire for a revival of the Christian doctrine in accordance with common sense. The spiritual origin of the various trends was mainly to be found in Western European Protestant movements. Very different in character, however, was the opposition which met the rigid Orthodox Church from such sectarian movements as attempted to solve religious conflicts on a mystical basis. There can be no doubt that these sectarian movements are particularly characteristic, as they rest on age-old Russian ideas. It is even believed that their spiritual basis should be seen partly in originally pagan dualistic conceptions of the world, partly in Bogomil heresis which had succeeded in surviving the persecutions and opposition of the Orthodox Russian Church. It must, however, be assumed that these tendencies were given their first formulation as a sectarian doctrine in the XVIIth Century, previous to the Nikonian Schism. It lived on under the name of *Khlysty*, a name given it by its opponents. This name is interpreted in various ways, now being understood in the general meaning of the word, 'whip', as referring to the flagellating customs which prevail in the sect, now taken as a corrupted form of the name of Christ, because a singular Christology plays a predominant part in the sect.<sup>38</sup>

Being convinced of the existence of a spiritual and a material world the Khlysty believed that, as the Supreme Lord of the spiritual world, God has the power to incarnate Himself in men of the material world. As the Son of God, Christ has the same power, and such incarnations may take place innumerable times and at innumerable places simultaneously. The first time it happened in Russia is supposed to have been in 1645 (or 1631) when the Lord of Sabaoth descended into the peasant Daniil Filipovič,<sup>39</sup> the second time when Christ was reborn in the former's spiritual son, the Vladimir peasant Ivan Suslov, who surrounded himself with a Mother of God and twelve Apostles, all of them incarnations of the corresponding characters from the Christian mythology.<sup>40</sup> The Khlysty possessed an extremely valuable collection of popular spirituals recounting the history of the sect. While interpreting the incarnation of God and Christ in human form in this literal manner, the sect at the same time put a purely symbolic conception on Christ's biography. The body was regarded as unclean, and ascetism was preached as the great ideal. They sought to avoid childbirth as being iniquitous, and at the same time favored the so-called spiritual (i.e. non-marital) connections between men and women. Though decidedly hostile to the official Church the Khlysty members demanded from their brethren a hypocritical recognition of it and preached their own doctrine at secret meetings at which they performed divine service under mystical forms approaching the gift of tongues and ecstasy and occasionally mass orgasm. The last of these phenomena is conceived as a mortification of the flesh pleasing to God.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Grass, Vol. I, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Grass, *ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Grass, *ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> See the article "Xlysty", p. 402-409, and Miliukov, p. 89.

One branch of the Khlysty, however, came to different conclusions on the ascetic basis which led to mass orgiasticism in the Khlysty. They called for castration of men and women in order to prevent any form of physical pleasure. Their first prophet was Kondratij Selivanov, who was banished to Siberia in 1772 because of his agitation in favor of castration.<sup>42</sup> His followers were called the *Skoptsy* or the *Castrated*, and they worshipped him both as Christ Incarnate and as Tsar Peter III, whereby the sect acquired a political tendency directed against the Empress Catherine II. This political tinge was subsequently lost, but although the Castrated, like the Khlysty, were energetically prosecuted by the Tsarist Government and the Church, they displayed an outstanding vitality. Incidentally they also, in the course of time, split up into a number of separate sects and sect-variants, chiefly on the question of how strictly the demand of castration was to be practised.<sup>43</sup>

As appears from the present description the entire Russian sectarianism was based on highly commendable efforts at introducing into Christianity a greater intensification of religious life, but however exalted the initial principles of each movement were, each of them would invariably end in almost medieval kinds of perversion and in fantastic conclusions. Over and over again we see this Russian peasant people with its pagan background lose its way in the attempt to introduce a deeper meaning into the Christian doctrine which had been chained by the official Church to the Procrustes bed of Dogma, only to end up in grim and tragic prejudices. What has been said by a judge of Russian sectarianism about the Schismatics also applies *mutatis mutandis* to all Russian sectarian quest for truth. "The masses refused to follow their leaders, and left to themselves they began to struggle in the dark."<sup>44</sup> That is the reason why Russian Christianity was not able to offer any really effective resistance when the October Revolution swept the country with an atheistic and antireligious storm following in its wake.

<sup>42</sup> Grass, Vol. II, p. 2ff.

<sup>43</sup> Grass, *ibidem*, *passim*.

<sup>44</sup> Miliukov, p. 39.

## Chapter 6.

# RUSSIAN FOLKLORE

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### 1.

Owing to specific cultural and sociological conditions the overpowering majority of the Russian population, namely the Russian peasantry, remained analphabets throughout centuries up to quite recent times. It lived its life more or less untouched by the international differentiation of culture. This is the chief reason why the Russian people preserved not only its ancient peasant culture with its characteristic customs, views, and habits, but also a corresponding oral form of poetic expression, reaching back as far as prehistoric and pre-Christian times.<sup>1</sup>

Pre-eminently, this applies to the lyric song in which the people's moods, feelings, and faiths were reflected. Only to a certain extent was this popular

<sup>1</sup> Svatava Jakobson, p. 1019.

spiritual life influenced by Christian conceptions instilled into the people by the Church with the greatest difficulty, frequently even in such a way that the Church made essential concessions to the age-old pagan animistic and magic ideas. The process of Christianizing ancient popular lyric poetry actually took place by the ancient forms being retained and their content barely sufficiently reinterpreted. In the case of East Slavic (Russian) epic poetry the evolution was a slightly different one. In the present survey only the two above-mentioned branches, lyric and epic poetry, will be treated, while other forms of poetic and semi-poetic activity, e.g. riddles, proverbs, popular sayings, and incantation formulas will be left out.

It has become customary to distinguish between such popular lyric songs as reflect the people's attitude to the cycle of nature and such as reflect the people's intimate family life.<sup>2</sup> Keeping in mind the origin of the Russian lyric folk song in a patriarchal peasant community which was principally based on agriculture, and in which the family constituted an economic and social unit, one is forced to acknowledge the fact that the attitude of the peasant to nature as well as his position within the family was entirely dominated by the process of reproduction itself. Natural phenomena and family affairs were regarded from one and the same angle, namely that of fertility. It will, therefore, hardly be possible to distinguish between two independent lyric cycles, a nature cycle and a family cycle.

In a primitive animistic peasant community as the one in question, there could be no absolute certainty beforehand that the order of nature with its annually recurring phases was something absolutely stable and unfailing. In order to uphold the order of nature man had to perform certain rites which secured the course of nature, i.e. supplied the fertility in soil and family which was the main purpose of production.<sup>3</sup> The rites, which occasionally took the form of games, were of highly imitative character and were accompanied by folk songs, mostly sung by choirs.<sup>4</sup> In these songs little scope was left for improvisation or individual performance, as the text of the ritual song was a set one and was very closely followed. Though the songs sung in different places and localities vary considerably, they are only variants and do not represent any break in the fundamental tendency to scrupulous adherence to the traditional ritual.

From time immemorial the Russian agrarian peasantry, both Great Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians, had been connected with the soil and the ancient pagan calendar with its fixed festival days. True, the calendar propagated by the Church had been accepted with its festivals connected with the life of Christ, His nativity, His death, His resurrection, and the acts of His apostles, as described in the tradition of the Gospel. But it had not succeeded in supplanting the old calendar, and the result was that they crossed. Pagan rites and ritual songs were assigned to Christian holydays and thereby partly invested with a new

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1021.

<sup>3</sup> Zelenin, p. 363.

<sup>4</sup> Aničkov, *Sbornik*, Vol. 74, p. 27.

meaning. The two culminating points in the old calendar were centred at winter solstice and summer solstice, which coincided approximately one with Christmas and New Year, the other with St. John's Day, St. Peter's Day, and St. Elijah's Day in the summer. These points of culmination were connected by a garland of ritual songs, all revolving round the subject of the approaching spring and summer. The population sought to secure the recurrence of these seasons for itself by ritual songs. A closer study of Russian Christmas and New Year songs, which were sung until recent times among all three Slavic (Russian) sister nations, reveals the fact that they were based upon purely pagan ideas of fertility, typical of an agricultural nation. At some date which we can no longer determine, and under cultural circumstances which must also remain unknown to us, these animistic conceptions were subjected to strong influence from the pagan pre-Christian Greco-Roman world.<sup>5</sup> The possibility cannot be excluded that this period should be assigned to a time when the Goths in Southern Russia acted as instruments and vehicles for Greco-Roman culture.<sup>6</sup> The ritual Christmas carols which were sung among the East Slavic peoples, notably among the Ukrainians, by itinerant bands of singers walking from door to door, were called *kol'ady*, and there is no doubt that this name was a loan from the Greco-Roman term for calendar (Lat. *calendae*), a term which was in current use within the entire Slavic and Roman world.<sup>7</sup> In these carols, which of course gradually acquired a Christian tincture, the master of the house, the East Slavic *pater familias*, was praised in a ritually set pattern of words as the generous giver,<sup>8</sup> evidently in order to wish him a plentiful harvest and increase of the family in the year to come. Often quite unmistakably pagan agricultural motifs would occur in these carols such as the invocation of the plow in a form approaching a feminine personification of agriculture as such (*Pluga*).<sup>9</sup>

The same thing applies to the New Year carols which were to be found especially well-preserved in the Ukraine, the so-called *ščedrivky*, named after the generous night, New Year's Eve. These carols were also meant to be sung by bands of singers walking from door to door. In both these types of carols, which actually overlap, various animals were mentioned, first and foremost the goat, which were imagined to be symbols of fertility. The border line between the fertility of nature and that of the family was frequently quite indistinct. As an accompaniment to certain ritual games which aimed at forecasting the future, were sung some characteristic *platter-songs* (*podbl'udnyje pesni*) with set texts while the participants threw various objects, chiefly rings and other jewels, into a covered

<sup>5</sup> Sokolov, p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> Ad. Stender-Petersen, *Slavisch-germanische Lehnwortkunde*, Göteborg 1927, p. 168.

<sup>7</sup> A. Preobraženskij, *Etimologičeskij slovar' russkogo jazyka*, Vol. I, Moscow 1910-14, p. 341, Berneker, *Slavisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1908-13, Vol. I, p. 544, and Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1950, p. 607.

<sup>8</sup> Zelenin, p. 376.

<sup>9</sup> A. B. Zernov, "Materialy po sel'sko-xoz'ajstvennoj magii", *Sovetskaja Etnografija*, Moscow 1932, nr. 3.



platter and pronounced good wishes for the one whose object was fished out. Vaticinal games were actually extremely common at these festivals, which marked the slow return of nature to life and luxuriance, and it was important to secure for oneself, or wish for others, the fecundity or the prosperity and wealth which was expected of the New Year.

In the months following upon New Year every opportunity was taken to bid Spring welcome, or call it forth by means of ritual games or songs.<sup>10</sup> The spring festivals originally coincided with Lent, the prolonged Christian period of fasting, but in order to avoid a conflict between the magic-symbolic feasting, required in springtime, and the abstinence from food and drink decreed by the Church, the pagan customs were transferred to an earlier time of the year and affixed to the international ecclesiastical season of the Carnival which had retained a great many pre-Christian features all over Europe. Among the Russian people this season, called *maslennica* (*butter week*), acquired a similar function: that of anticipating the expected abundance of crops in the year to come by ritual orgies of eating and drinking. As a rule the spring songs consisted in carefully set forms of lyric-dramatic incantations addressed to the beautiful Spring (*Vesna krasnaja*) requesting her to come with flowers, fertility, and abundant wealth. In the games which were performed for this purpose was revealed the ancient fear that spring should stay away and winter continue its reign. In a way which is no longer easy to penetrate, unmistakable features from a pre-Christian ancestral cult were intermixed with these games and songs, as great care was taken that the dead should not feel neglected. In choral songs which were composed as dialogues and in which were imitated the pursuits connected with farming, the family's great-grandfather *did* or *ded*, apparently the deceased progenitor, was generally invoked in continually repeated refrains in which he was also called by terms of endearment like *lado*. A certain degree of personification of the Spring is found in songs addressing the mystical being *Ovsen'*, a name which has been interpreted in many different ways, especially because there are several variants and popular corruptions of it.<sup>11</sup> In my opinion there cannot be any doubt that it is derived from *\*o-vesen'* (cf. *vesna*) and means 'springtime in general' rather than a mystical or mythical person.<sup>12</sup>

Purely pagan were the spring songs which were sung seven weeks after Easter (*semik*) and usually devoted to the nymphs, those of the forest as well as those of the rivers, the so-called *rusalki*. Their name also indicates a pre-Christian influence from the Roman *dies rosarum*.<sup>13</sup> Certain indications suggest that also in these songs were the dead actually commemorated, but their characteristic feature is that behind the rites, performed to the accompaniment of singing, we divine certain ancient, sublimated, and mitigated orgiastic customs. Similar tenden-

<sup>10</sup> Aničkov, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> I. Porfir'jev, *Istorija ruskoj slovesnosti*, Vol. I, Kazan 1909, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> V. Dal', *Tolkovyj slovar' živogo velikoruskogo jazyka*, 4. edition, St. Petersburg-Moscow 1912, Vol. I, p. 9. — Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1950, p. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> See above, p. 47. — Cf. A. N. Veselovskij, *Razyskanija v oblasti duxovnogo stixa*, p. 204-206.

cies are believed to be recognizable behind the so-called *Kupala-songs* (*kupal'skije pesni*), sung on St. John's Day. It is an interesting feature of these songs that John the Baptist, in Russian *Ivan Kupala*, or simply *Kupala*, with whose day they are connected, had practically lost his Christian stamp completely and had become wholly paganized. In the general fraternization which was customary on this day are found traces of a bacchantic hetairism.<sup>14</sup> With the harvest songs assigned to the autumn the festivals of the calendar were concluded.

It may be said of this entire group of lyrics, connected as they were with distinct rites gradually reduced to the form of games, that they were characterized by a remarkable sense of drama and so firm a composition as to render them capable of surviving centuries of persecution and prohibition by Church and State. The foundation on which they rested, the conservative agrarian peasant community with its cultural isolation and patriarchal primitivity, was strong enough to triumph in the battle. There can hardly be any doubt that this group of ritual songs was an immediate product of the peasantry as such. They were pure peasant songs, never known to other classes of the Russian population. They were a faithful expression of an animistic and magical world of ideas, a fruit of the indigene conception of nature and life inherent in a primitive peasant community.

It is far more doubtful whether the songs sung by the population at weddings and funerals were actually a primitive inheritance and, as far as their origin is concerned, original products of a poetic trend in the peasant. It was characteristic of the peasant marriage and burial rites that the central event itself, the bride's parting with her home and the mother's or wife's parting with the dead husband, found their expression in the *lament* or *dirge*. No wedding would be celebrated correctly if the bride did not pay homage to her parents by lamenting her separation from them, and no funeral could leave behind a satisfactory memory if the relatives did not pay homage to the deceased by commemorating him in protracted laments. The characteristic feature of these laments was, however, that unlike the choral songs their text was not immutably fixed and observed by generation upon generation. It is true that clichés, stock phrases, conventional repetitions, etc. played a prominent part in these songs, but they were subordinated to improvisation, and the mourner would strive to find a strikingly ornate form, a particularly complicated composition, an exalted imagery. The art of lamentation was given a unique development among the Russian peasantry towards refinement of language and style. Especially the women excelled in this art, and as it was not given every bride or widow to find the adequate expression of her grief, her place was often taken by a professional or semi-professional weeper who took on the paid performance of the lamentations required. Such female weepers might become famous if they knew how to introduce specific personal matters into the wide

<sup>14</sup> A. N. Veselovskij, "Geterizm, pobratimstvo i kumovstvo v kupal'skoj obr'adnosti", *Žurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvěščenija*, Vol. CCXCI, St. Petersburg 1894, p. 287-318.

but technically conventional framework of the lament and how to give poetically inspired expression to the grief assumed to be felt by the bride or widow. We have examples of outstanding lyric talents among them.<sup>15</sup>

This variety of lyric does not, however, seem to have been created by the peasant class, but to have been taken over from higher classes in the early Middle Ages. The terms employed at weddings denote bride and groom and the wedding guests as princes and princesses, boyars and boyarinas. This terminology seems to indicate that the wedding customs preserved by the peasant originally belonged in the higher classes of a feudal community. Certain traits even reveal that these lyrics must date from a time when the prince was still surrounded by his retinue of warriors. The attitude of the wedding guests and especially that of the groomsmen is precisely that of a retinue, ready to protect their prince and his princess against possible harm. Presumably these customs have passed, in the course of time, from the higher classes down to the peasantry, where they were allowed to continue their existence because conditions in this class had suffered only a very slight change since feudal times. To lament on certain important occasions, especially at deaths, was a well-known custom throughout the Byzantine-Slavic world in the Middle Ages. Old Russian literature abounds in moving examples of elaborate laments in the *Lives of Saints* as well as in the *Lives of Princes*.<sup>16</sup> As the most beautiful among these examples may be mentioned the highly poetical lament with which, in the *Lay of Prince Igor*, the Princess Jaroslavna in the town of Putivl' bewails her distant husband's supposed death, simultaneously invoking the powers of nature and beseeching them to give him back to her.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.

Such an origin in the higher strata of the feudal community must also be presupposed in the case of the Russian epic-heroic poetry, preserved by the peasantry up to our own time. Also, it is characteristic of the Russian oral narrative poems that the element of improvisation plays an equally important part in them as in the bridal and death laments. But there is a clear difference between them. Whereas in the laments no specific plot of action is described, because the mourner is concerned with achieving new variations and shades of the common human motif, death or marriage, the epic poem has its given narrative subject matter which should be reproduced. And so the individual element here consists in the choice of devices through which the reproduction of the subject matter may appear. A closer study of the latter confirms the opinion that the present form of the epic poems must go back to the earliest feudal ages in the history of Russia, to the first Kiev princes of Varangian stock. It must have originated in

<sup>15</sup> Sokolov, p. 177.

<sup>16</sup> Sokolov, p. 176. - Cf. Ad. Stender-Petersen, *Anthology of Old Russian Literature*, New York 1954, Introduction, p. XI-XII.

<sup>17</sup> *La Geste du Prince Igor*, New York 1948, p. 70-72. - Cf. Robinson, p. 145.

the sphere of none but these princes, namely among their retinue of warriors.<sup>18</sup> There can, for example, hardly be any doubt that Vol'ga, Il'ja Muromec, and Dobryn'a, the three great heroes of the Russian epic poems, reflect the legendary King Oleg (Nordic *Helgi*) and King Vladimir's uncle (in Nordic probably also called *Helgi*).<sup>19</sup> King Vladimir himself also frequently appears in the Russian epic poems, though greatly contaminated with the figure of Prince Vladimir Monomachus.

In the endeavor to elucidate completely the genesis and origin of the Russian epic poetry an attempt has been made to interpret the nucleus of it as imported, i.e. actually translated, Varangian poetry which had originated among the Nordic-speaking retinue of the Old Russian kings.<sup>20</sup> But a thorough analysis of the arguments put forward in favor of this audacious theory has proved it to be untenable,<sup>21</sup> even if it may be regarded as proved beyond doubt that a flourishing prose saga existed among the earliest Varangians.<sup>22</sup> There can hardly be any question that the form of the Russian epic poems is older than its oldest motifs. When the feudal Old Russian empire came into existence its bards in the retinue made use of an already existing form.<sup>23</sup> The possibility cannot be altogether excluded that the pre-feudal epic poem had in reality been a lyrical or semi-lyrical lament motivated by the death of the progenitor.<sup>24</sup> Only in this way does it become understandable that the epic poems, extolling great kings and warriors in prehistory, could be so willingly and so completely accepted and further developed by the Russian peasantry.

The repertoire of the heroic epic poems, and of their continuation, the historical ballads,<sup>25</sup> covers the entire history of Russia from the Kiev age over the Muscovite period up to modern times. They must have been known in all parts of Russia. Nevertheless it is characteristic that to-day these poems are only extant in the far North, in the Arkhangelsk region, on the coasts of the White Sea, in the present Russian Karelia, mainly round Lake Onega.<sup>26</sup> In Central Russia too, in the Volga, Don, and Ural areas, even in Siberia, this branch of poetry has spread widely, but the art of reciting epic poems has been mainly preserved in the relatively free and independent peasant and fishing population of Northern Russia. In the Ukraine it is quite unknown, in Byelorussia little known, despite the fact that these areas, notably the Ukraine, represent the place of origin of the epic

<sup>18</sup> Sokolov, p. 252.

<sup>19</sup> Sokolov, p. 252, 255. — Cf. Ad Stender-Petersen, *Die Varügersage als Quelle der altrussischen Chronik*, Aarhus-Leipzig 1934, p. 255.

<sup>20</sup> St. Rożniecki, *Varęgiske minder i den russiske helteedigtning*, Copenhagen 1914.

<sup>21</sup> Ad Stender-Petersen, "Études Varègues V. La théorie de l'origine varègue de la byline russe", *Classica et Mediaevalia*, Vol. VII-VIII, Copenhagen 1945-46. — Cf. Ad Stender-Petersen, *Varangica*, Århus 1953, p. 217ff.

<sup>22</sup> Ad Stender-Petersen, *Die Varügersage*, passim.

<sup>23</sup> Roman Jakobson, p. 62-66.

<sup>24</sup> Stammeler, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Stief, passim.

<sup>26</sup> Sokolov, p. 227.

poems. The Russian peasantry call them *stariny*, i.e. 'accounts of old times', but in Russian folklore research they have been named *byliny*, after an expression found in the *Lay of Igor*<sup>27</sup> and actually meaning 'accounts of the present' rather than 'legends of the past'.

The Russian poem-singer regards in principle his poems as historical and takes it for granted that they cover actual events in the past. Nor is it difficult to discover the historical character of the heroes' names. But it would be fundamentally wrong to conclude from this that every Russian *bylina* reflects this or that historical event, or to trace them back to definite historical circumstances. This error has to a large extent been committed by the Russian *historical school*.<sup>28</sup> Against this school has been argued the fact that a historical event will never spontaneously, or directly, produce parallel consequences in literature or folklore, but only consequences of historical nature, historical events.<sup>29</sup> A historical event is unable to work upon literature or folklore, unless it sheds its factual nature and assumes a literary, or folkloristic, aspect. This change of aspect or character is a necessary preliminary to the incorporation of a historical fact in literature or folklore. The adaptation to literature takes place in an easily defined manner: a psychological association is created between the historical fact and some well-known literary or folkloristic situation which, so to speak, resembles it. The association is thus based on literary, or folkloristic, tradition. If this tradition commands a literary, or folkloristic, motif or plot, which in several respects resembles the given historical event, the latter will prove suitable for literary, or folkloristic, treatment. It will be interpreted in terms of literature or folklore and may accordingly be introduced into literature or folklore at the sacrifice of the already acknowledged traditional motif or plot. Otherwise it will not be introduced and remain outside literature and folklore. It then turns out that in most cases the historical event is mutilated, or adapted, in such a way as to resemble an already existing literary, or folkloristic, motif.

Accordingly, the subject matter of an epic poem must not be regarded as a more or less exact reproduction of an historical event. The Russian *byline* with its firmly established repertoire of motifs, counting about 100,<sup>30</sup> never incorporates historical facts for their own sake, it attracts only motifs of folkloristic nature, i.e. those acknowledged on account of their kinship with other traditional motifs. Every attempt at seeking (or revealing) pure history in the *bylines* must accordingly be doomed to failure. But at the same time it is extremely characteristic of the *bylines* that they always try to provide a historical reason for their motifs. This state of things has been duly recorded by the historical school, but it has also been the basis for its false method. Whatever the origin may be of the motif

<sup>27</sup> *La Geste du Prince Igor*, New York 1948, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> Speranskij, p. 95ff.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the critical estimate of this school in *Classica et Mediaevalia*, Vol. VII, p. 206-209, or in Stender-Petersen, *Varangica*, p. 221ff.

<sup>30</sup> Sokolov, p. 224.

of a *byline*, the employment of it is invariably accompanied by a historical motivation or rationalization. The *byline*-singers as a rule looked upon their *bylines* as *staroje-byvaloje* ('ancient and true'), as if the *byline* only spoke of events which had actually taken place in a remote past. But though the historical character of the Russian *byline* is formally dressed in this way, it does not follow that the *byline* itself becomes more historical than any historical novel. The problem of the *byline*'s historical character is therefore not solved, it will seem, by pointing out the historical authenticity of its motif, but by revealing the causes which have led to the given motif being provided with this, or another, historical rationalization. The rationalization will chiefly consist in a connection of the motif with historical names, localities, or other circumstances. To deny that this connection is essential would be equal to a destruction of the idea of the *byline* itself. In a scientific definition of this type of oral epic poetry it is necessary to stress the connection mentioned above.

In a treatise on the *Byline about Solovej Budimirovič*, L'aščenko<sup>31</sup> has tried to interpret it in the light of the biography of the Norwegian Varangian King Harald Hadradi. In order to establish a parallelism between the *byline* and Harald's biography, he simply attributes the motif of rivalry, which in reality is probably a late element, to the original plot of the *byline* and gets a beautiful correspondence between this trait of rivalry in the *byline* and certain details in the saga literature about King Harald. In some variants of the *byline* he finds not only features connected with Harald's journey to Russia but also such as reflect his stay in Constantinople. The riches Harald had accumulated during his visit to Constantinople, his supposed pilgrimage to Palestine, his acid reply to the Empress Zoe, his adventures with the young Princess Maria, his imprisonment in Constantinople, his marriage to Silkisif, whom he probably left behind him in Novgorod when going back to Norway, all this is, according to L'aščenko, easily found reflected in the variants of the Russian *byline*. Only one thing is lacking in making the parallel complete: all the names in the *byline* are entirely different from those found in the supposed Nordic source. In the *byline* Harald is called Solovej, Jarisleif is called Vladimir, Ellisif, Jaroslav's daughter, is called Zabava and is here Vladimir's niece. Considering what has been said above about the importance of names for the historical rationalization of *bylines*, it will be understood that this lack of agreement is fatal to the whole method applied.

Even when limiting one's study to the so-called *historical* poems, which according to this most unfortunate name should be particularly intimately connected with historical events, one finds that the literary, or folkloristic, element definitely dominates the adaptation of the subject in these *bylines*. It is, e.g., very characteristic that a *byline* dealing with the relations between Russia and Sweden under Catherine II should re-interpret her war against Gustavus III according to the

<sup>31</sup> A. I. L'aščenko, "Bylina o Solov'je Budimiroviče i saga o Garal'de", *Sertum Bibliographicum*, Petrograd 1922.

well-known literary pattern of Judith and Holofernes. Actually only the names of the characters betray that we are not here concerned with the Biblical story but with persons from modern history.

The same point of view which has been employed to illuminate the relation of the secular oral poetry to history should also – if one were to be consistent – be applied to the Biblical element in the spiritual oral poems, called *duxovnyje stixi*. Actually there is no fundamental difference between the form of the secular and the form of the spiritual oral poetry.<sup>32</sup> The spiritual poems also treat their subjects as if they spoke of events which had taken place in the past. However, they may be said to appear far more dependent on literary sources than the *bylines*. This very difference between secular and spiritual oral poetry concerning the origin of their motifs seems to reveal a social difference in the origin of the two species in general. They must have had their roots in two different strata of the population. We have seen that the secular folk song probably originated in feudal Kiev's military class, more especially in the retinue of the princes. In the case of the spiritual song, however, the close dependence on literary sources points to it having originated in a literary, probably a clerical, environment. At the same time there can be no doubt that it did not thrive in the official or highest circles within the Orthodox Church, where it was more often met with opposition, but sought its home partly among the lower clergy, partly in outright sectarian movements. When at the end of the XVIIIth Century the Schism created a violent stir in religious life among the masses, spiritual oral poetry was in for a period of enormous flourishing and development. But especially striking was the interest shown by such movements as the Dukhobors or the Castrated in spiritual poetry. In their midst was born a very extensive oral poetry, closely following the methods and forms of the *byline*. Though not completely devoid of certain philosophical tendencies of a speculative nature, this poetry was mainly concerned with describing, in a purely epic way, the founders and martyrs of the various sects.

Thus we see how, in the course of its thousand-year-old history, Russian oral epic poetry descended from the higher strata of the population to the peasantry and was cultivated and faithfully preserved by the latter, with admirable reverence and sense of poetic values, as a unique spiritual and poetic treasure. This process would naturally involve a certain disfiguration in accordance with peasant ideals, outlooks, and wishes. Though retaining their individual features which had been moulded by tradition, the heroes gradually assumed a psychological form in conformity with the typical peasant mentality. They spoke the peasant's language, they agreed with the peasant's ideas, they expressed the peasant's innermost dreams, they represented the peasant's past. Through them the peasant preserved an idea of his people's history.

<sup>32</sup> Sokolov, p. 284.



## Chapter 7.

# THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE

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### 1.

It has been the destiny of the Russian peasant to be always the object, never the subject, of history. His role in the history of the Russian State has ever been one of suffering. When this history is contemplated from the point of view of the peasant a moving picture emerges.

The prehistoric Russian community, whose essential features we can only reconstruct in a purely hypothetical way, must have been an archaic peasant community without definite political contours or forms of organization. It probably rested on a comparatively sparse Slavic population, which lived mainly in the river system of the Dnieper and its tributaries and was engaged in a spontaneous, slow, and disorganized expansion towards the east, west, and north. Most probably this population lived not only by hunting, fishing, bee-keeping, and primitive



forest agriculture, but also knew higher forms of agriculture, at least in such areas as were suitable. This seems to be confirmed by the results of the latest archeological excavations.<sup>1</sup> The population made its own tools and utensils and consumed its own food products. The type of society which determined the character and content of social life was a traditional, and essentially patriarchal, family and tribe organization with certain tendencies towards forming close and separate village communes.<sup>2</sup> These tendencies must have led to a very early construction of large fortified settlements, called *goroda*, on specially important traffic routes or crossroads, and that is why already in prehistoric times Russia was known in Scandinavia as *Garðar* (characteristically enough a plural form) or *Garðariki*, i.e. 'country of fortified settlements'.<sup>3</sup>

Simple conventions current among the people regulated social life within and between the families and tribes. These tribes were separated from each other by boundaries of a purely physical geographic nature, forests, marshes, rivers, and lakes, which were at the same time the daily cumbersome field of activity. Only to the south were expanses of fertile black-earth fields, slowly submerging in the unconquerable steppes. The cart as well as the sledge were known to the people, but more as means of transport than as means of traffic. Soon the river became the first and, for the time being, the only effective road of communication, and the simple hollowed-out tree trunk came to serve as a conveyance for adventurous settlers. By the simple means of dragging it on rolling logs from river to river the distances by land between two river systems were covered, and they advanced farther than nature had hitherto permitted.<sup>4</sup> And so the forests and marshes could not in the long run prevent the Slavic population from pressing farther and farther on, burning off always new forest areas and subjugating ever more cleared land.

Agriculture which soon became the people's major livelihood was open to anybody. The peasant was his own master. Within the frame of the family organization he was an independent producer who owned his own tools and had control of his own farm and holding,<sup>5</sup> and he long remained so, as distinct from possible slaves or thralls whose existence in prehistoric Russia is even extremely doubtful. Characteristically enough, the word *rob* (or *rab*) which later came to mean 'slave' was the basis for the derivation *rob'onok* (*reb'onok*), meaning 'child', and was therefore probably in origin simply a designation for any tilling member of the family (*čel'ad'*). Even to-day it enters into the composition of the word *xlebo-rob* which means 'grainproducer'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tret'jakov, p. 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> Grekov, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> Braun, p. 195, and Voronin, p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> See N. N. Voronin, "Sredstva i puti soobščeniija", *Istorija kul'tury drevnej Rusi*, Vol. I, p. 280-314.

<sup>5</sup> Grekov, p. 191.

<sup>6</sup> Preobraženskij, *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*, New York 1951, Vol. II, p. 190, 169, Berneker, *Slavisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. I, Heidelberg 1908-13, p. 634, Vasmer, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol. II, Heidelberg 1950, p. 479.

It is true that the Russian word for 'peasant' is now *krest'janin*, and there can be no doubt that the word is connected with the word *krest* meaning 'cross' in modern Russian.<sup>7</sup> It is now open to anybody to engage in beautiful speculations as to the mission of the Russian peasant as a 'cross-bearer' among the nations, or as the exponent of an elevated outlook which sees the meaning of life in patient suffering, as the representative of a quite non-European religion of passivity. This would be pure imagination. For the word *krest'janin* is not derived from the word *krest* in the sense of 'cross', but in its older sense of the name of Christ, and its contrast in Old Russian was the word *poganin*, meaning 'pagan'. The same contrast is found in Western Europe between the Latin words *christianus* and *paganus*, and the parallelism between 'Christian' and 'pagan' in Eastern and Western Europe would thus seem to be complete. But Latin *paganus* originally meant 'country-dweller' (derived from *pagus* 'village'), thus revealing the fact that Christianity of the early Middle Ages was a town phenomenon while paganism was confined to the peasants in the country. Russian *krest'janin*, on the other hand, informs us that in ancient Russia Christianity was in the main characteristic of the resident population while paganism was limited to the nomadic steppe population. In other words, the contrast between town and country, characteristic of Europe in the Middle Ages, corresponded to an East European contrast between people of opposite types of production and community, between the people using the plow and the people using saddle and wagon and raising cattle. Incidentally it is not at all unimportant that the terminology *krest'janin/poganin* was not originally a popular, but an artificial one, which originated with the state organs. Only under the Tatar yoke is the word supposed to have acquired the sense of 'peasant', as the Tatars attached a depreciatory sense to the name of the Christian, with the result that the upper classes of Russian society promptly scouted the term and limited it to the now despised peasant.<sup>8</sup> The grecized form *xristianin* could always be used to denote the Greek-Orthodox religion of everybody.

Besides the word *rob (rab)* there seems in prehistoric and in the earliest historic times to have existed an entire and very complicated terminology for the peasant class.<sup>9</sup> In our days it is difficult to reconstruct the original meaning of these words, which have been devaluated in the course of time as a result of the differentiation of classes, and this circumstance expresses the tragic social history of the Russian peasant in a purely philological way.

Ever since the beginning of time Russians, as an agricultural people, were deeply marked by their relation to the soil, and it is quite characteristic that the Russian word *zeml'a* means both 'land' and 'country'. Wherever the land was arable the country was Russian. From time immemorial the Russian peasant has been pervaded by a perpetual, insatiable craving for land, and Russian history

<sup>7</sup> Preobraženskij, Vol. I, p. 383-4, Vasmer, Vol. I, p. 662.

<sup>8</sup> Grekov, p. 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Grekov, p. 111-225.

bears the stamp of this agrarian need for expansion.<sup>10</sup> Another factor in the game of history was the power, or will, of the Russian State to satisfy this land hunger, and the way in which it was satisfied, or the degree in which it was satisfied. During long periods there was a glaring disproportion between this land hunger and its rational satisfaction. And more than anything else it was this disproportion which during long periods caused the social and cultural stagnation in Russia.

At the outset of Russian history there was actually no such disproportion between the two factors. At the time when the Varangians, or their predecessors, the Nordic *Rus'*-people, founded the Russian State round Novgorod and Kiev as a new step in the development of trade between the Baltic and the Black Sea, there was no cause for the Russian population, practically left unaffected by the policy of their kings or princes, to complain of lack of land. While the Varangians established and fortified their famous trade route from the north due south along the Dnieper line, the Russian agricultural population was busily engaged in an almost elementary colonizing expansion, taking ever more land under the plow. Whereas to the south expansion was retarded by the untamed steppe zone with its nomads of Turko-Tatar origin, it progressed almost unrestrained to the east and west and especially to the north as a slow, but never-ceasing movement.<sup>11</sup> True enough, the native population became tributary under the kings and princes of the Rurik line and had to deliver up hides and furs, mead, honey and wax, timber, barges and boats, animals and thralls to the foreign lords who carried on trade with Byzantium. Every year in the early summer large flotillas set out from certain trading stations all over the country down to the river routes to the rapidly developing Kiev where the goods were re-loaded into bigger ships or boats. When with great difficulty, and not infrequently with heavy losses, they had forced the dangerous Dnieper rapids in the steppe zone infested with nomads, the exports were subsequently directed to Constantinople. So long as the princes and their retinue were absorbed in organizing and exploiting this trade the Russian peasant, only tolerably taxed, could proceed steadily, a free and unfettered man who had no difficulty in paying his tribute in kind to the lords. No one could prevent him from moving on at will, selling his land at will, or taking virgin soil under cultivation at will.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.

But in the tribute itself lay concealed the germ of his later undoing. The peasant became the object of exploitation by others. The peculiar kind of feudalization which ancient Russian community underwent,<sup>13</sup> caused a change to take place in the relation between princes and peasantry. A highly significant shift had taken place within the economic interests of the ever increasing number of princes and

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Chapter I, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> Platonov, *Učebnik*, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> *Istoriia SSSR*, Vol. I, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup> Vernadsky, "On Feudalism", p. 3-14.

their retinue. Trade gradually suffered a complete loss of its importance as a source of wealth. In this connection it was of considerable importance that Crusading times had drawn Byzantium into close contact with Western Europe, which circumstance turned out unfavorably for Russia. By slow degrees the Byzantine trade now slipped from the hands of the Russian princes. Not even the smallest attempt was made on their side to enter into competition with the Western European rivals. The reason for this was found in the fact that the princes became great landowners to a marked degree, agriculturists on a large scale. Formerly they had more or less loyally submitted to the peculiar system of primogeniture which determined the succession and caused the numerous members of the ruling family to move about unceasingly from one principality to another, from a smaller one to a bigger one, with the capital of Kiev as the alluring goal. But now they tended to follow increasingly their desire to remain each on his patrimonial estate in order to cultivate its soil as his private property in his own private interest, while simultaneously their retinue formed a group of vassals, each with his own private landed property. Agriculture and the administration of the principality brought about a new conception of political domination: it was now equivalent to a narrowly private agrarian domination of an estate and was based on the subjection and exploitation of the peasant. Under protection from the State, Church and monasteries treated the peasant in exactly the same way.

The feudalization of the Old Russian State took place at the expense of the peasantry. The big landowner now appeared as an aggressive and triumphant factor, whether prince, member of the retinue, or abbot. He took control of the land and by economic and other measures he subordinated the peasant. On all sides threatening clouds were now compiling against the free peasant. The State demanded recruits for the army, in order to perform her tasks, and material means to wage her wars and feuds and to secure peaceful aims. An ever greater number of princes and their descendants made increasing demands on the material benefits of life. The number of servants, employed by the princes, increased similarly, the boyar class grew, the princely retinue settled as landowners. And though there was still enough land, yet the soil was exclusively worked by the peasant's hands and the peasant's horses, and a growing number of people were dependent on the peasant's grain.<sup>14</sup> But as yet the position of the peasant was not a tragic one. His relation to the landowner was confined to the payment of a more or less reasonable tax in kind. Beginning with the XIIth Century this relation even seemed more profitable to him than that of the XIth Century when the dependence of the personally subordinate peasantry on the squire had probably found expression in heavy bond-service.<sup>15</sup> He was not under the immediate sway and oppression of the squire, and his dependence on him, which was of an economic nature only, was regulated by fixed local rules and established custom.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, about the end of the

<sup>14</sup> Grekov, p. 233.

<sup>15</sup> *Istorija SSSR*, Vol. I, p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 202, 325.

XVth Century grain became an object of trade on the home market, which further stimulated the activity of the landowner and the tiller, and increased the prosperity of both. The aristocratic magnates and boyars, who together with the Church controlled immense areas of land, were not indifferent to the progress and prosperity of their dependent peasants.<sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously with the consolidation and strengthening of the Muscovite State, however, a change took place as to the internal political structure. This change was politically inevitable, but was to bring about extremely sad results for the peasantry. The first tendencies of this kind made themselves felt as early as the second half of the XVth Century, but were not fully developed till under Ivan the Terrible. His policy should most probably be seen on the background of the intrusion of foreign commercial capital into Russia. Moscow was now by no means as independent of Europe as she had been, especially owing to the ultimate shaking-off of the Tatar yoke. The incorporation of the trading republic of Novgorod and its vast areas in the north as far as Arkhangelsk and the White Sea had brought about a far closer contact than ever before between Moscow and the Western European countries of commerce and culture. By means of Western European agents who had settled in the capital itself, Muscovy had begun to export her raw materials and receive foreign currency and foreign manufactured products in return. In the last instance commercial interests were the reason which forced Muscovy to fight protracted wars on two fronts: not only against the Kazan and Astrakhan Tatars who continued to harass the country from the east and south-east, but also against the far more powerful Polish-Lithuanian twin state and the changing lords of the Baltic countries.

This development caused Tsar Ivan the Terrible to create a professional warrior class with compulsory military duties. This class received its pay from the government and in return obeyed it exclusively. As a matter of fact the seeds of such a reorganization of the military system had already been sown in the second half of the XVth Century, as at that time an enlisted warrior caste depending on the government alone had been created instead of the feudal military system, or by the side of its remnants.<sup>18</sup> The idea was to render the government independent, or less dependent, on the individual descendants of the princes and boyars with their private armies. Ivan the Terrible went the whole length creating a class which was recruited from the most different layers of society irrespective of birth and nobility, and which had as its source of livelihood only the profession of arms. It grew rapidly during the many wars which the Tsar had to fight. In order to secure the effective military force of the State and render it independent of the aristocracy Tsarism would first and foremost have to satisfy the demands and wishes of this state warrior class at all costs. This could only be obtained by grants of land in the central parts of the country, and as the aristocracy owned the best land in these

<sup>17</sup> Grekov, p. 252, 587.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 609.

parts and possessed the best landlabor, the State, or the Tsar, was bound to clash with the great princely and boyar landowners in acute political and economic conflict. Based on the strictly absolutistic idea that the entire amount of land in the country was the personal property of the Tsar for him to rule over supreme, and that the great landowners only held their patrimonies as a favor,<sup>19</sup> Ivan the Terrible carried out his famous wholesale expropriation of all central Muscovite estates, seized with systematic ruthlessness the patrimonies of the landed nobility, and moved the latter by sheer force to the outskirts and borders of the country.<sup>20</sup> While in this way consistently doing away with the aristocracy's economic and political position, he simultaneously created, out of the confiscated estates, a special state within the State, the Tsar's separate property (*opričnina*).<sup>21</sup> He accomplished his policy through a special Iron Guard (the so-called *opričniki*) which obeyed him without murmur. He drowned every protest in blood, parceled out the old feudal estates which had been annexed as the Tsar's separate property, and distributed the lots to his faithful guardsmen and partisans as a compensation for military services. Though this compensation was of course intended as a personal gift only and was not hereditary, the foundation was nevertheless laid for a new class, the Russian gentry, which gradually absorbed the remains of the former aristocracy.<sup>22</sup>

This reform, however, led to a considerable lowering of the social status of the actual farmer, namely that of the peasant. The laboring peasantry, which had been able to feel more or less economically secure under the supreme rule of the great landowners, now to a great extent passed with the land into the power of the new lesser landowner. The ancient patriarchal relation to the landlord was replaced by a scantily veiled relation of exploitation. For the new squire was naturally not content with levying ordinary taxes and produce rent on the peasant, but made unrestricted use of his right to tax him at his own will, and also forced him to perform an increasing amount of bond-service on his manor. The peasants lost their ancient relatively extensive self-government and economic independence and became in every respect dependent on their landlords. Soon the peasant found that the State had entered into a close alliance with his economic enemy, being intimately connected with the latter through common interests. The greater the landowner's power over the peasant was made by the State, the safer were the State revenues and the more effective the military services which the landowner was under obligation to perform.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 375, — Platonov, *Lekcii*, p. 172.

<sup>20</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 378–380.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 379, — Platonov, *Lekcii*, p. 181–191.

<sup>22</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 380, — Platonov, *Lekcii*, p. 191–195.

<sup>23</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 383, — Platonov, *Lekcii*, p. 196–198.

Among the peasantry rose one of those anonymous, elementary and anarchic mass movements, which later so frequently seized the Russian people with blind fury. The peasants began to make use of their yet uncurtailed right to move at will, and masses now moved or fled from economic pressure at home towards the south and east where newly conquered and unoccupied Tatar territories were awaiting colonization.<sup>24</sup> In very short time the movement had grown to such a degree that only one third of the estates around Moscow were under cultivation while the remainder lay waste and abandoned.<sup>25</sup> Spurred on by his economic interests and supported by the State, the landowner sought in every way to retain the peasant and force him into conditions which in reality, if not legally, were equivalent to villenage. Without the slightest legal sanction he established the rule that debt to the landowner abolished the peasant's right to move until the debt was settled. And as it was easy enough to force the rack-rented peasant into indebtedness, he was very soon tied to the land. Now it was only a question of preventing by force his secret flight or of recapturing the fugitive by veritable hunts and bringing him back to slavery.<sup>26</sup>

A seething unrest spread among the working peasantry. It sank ever deeper into debt, penury, starvation, and want. And when the dynasty came to an end with Tsar Fyodor, the weak-minded son of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and his wise brother-in-law, Tsar Boris Godunov, the first violent social explosion took place at the beginning of the XVIIth Century, shaking the State in its foundation and threatening it with dissolution and destruction.<sup>27</sup> Outwardly this period of *confusion (smuta)* was characterized by the many genuine as well as spurious candidates to the throne and Tsar pretenders seeking to come into power. But inwardly it was a distinctly revolutionary class war between the major social classes: the gentry, created by Ivan the Terrible, and struggling to retain its present position, the boyar and princely great landowners, now attempting to re-establish their powerful position in the State which had been reduced by Ivan the Terrible, and finally the rioting peasantry which had nothing to lose and everything to gain. But when in 1613, after 8 years of incessant bloody strife of each against every one, the by no means aristocratic Mikhail Romanov was elected Tsar and the feud was brought to an end, it turned out that the landed gentry had been victorious, the political power of the nobility had been destroyed for ever, and the peasant had gained nothing whatever.<sup>28</sup>

The Romanov dynasty continued the fatal agrarian policy of the previous Tsars. More than ever before the welfare of the State depended on the military and financial resources of the landed gentry based on military tenure, and the

<sup>24</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 387, - Platonov, *Učebnik*, p. 176.

<sup>25</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 387-388, - Platonov, *Lekcii*, p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. I, p. 412-13.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 403-447.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 452-453.



interests of the peasants were in an increasingly relentless way sacrificed in favor of those of the gentry. The period of reclamation during which the squire was entitled to hunt a runaway peasant was considerably extended.<sup>29</sup> The right of the peasant to move away after having settled his debt with the squire became strictly limited and even partly abolished. The peasant communes were imposed with collective responsibility for the individual payment of taxes, a burden which was doubly onerous at a time when flight from the home soil was still an everyday occurrence. And finally all time limit for the squire was canceled, so that he was allowed to have his runaway peasant searched for as long as he pleased, and the peasant's natural right of departure was made directly dependent on the squire's consent. The whole of this development was ultimately given its legislative conclusion under Tsar Alexis Romanov in his famous statute of 1649: villenage was now a fact. Slowly serfdom was being prepared.<sup>30</sup>

Another attempt by the peasants to throw off the heavy yoke was the well-known peasant and Cossack rising (1669-1671), named after the chieftain Stenka Razin.<sup>31</sup> But though even Moscow, the capital, at one period trembled at his plundering, ravaging, murdering, and burning bands, yet it was evident that here again the far better organized gentry, supported by the Tsar, would ultimately triumph. And indeed the result was that villenage was now rapidly developed into pronounced serfdom, as the landowner introduced the rule, without any protest from the State, but also without its direct legal authorization, that the peasant could be sold with as well as without land.

Before Peter the Great villenage had been justified to a certain extent by the circumstance that even the nobleman himself was bound to his personal duty, namely compulsory military service. This balance was completely destroyed in the subsequent development. The nobility knew how to obtain ever increasing relief from its state obligations and ever greater privileges, while at the same time taking care that the peasant's burdens were continually increased. A glaring disproportion ensued between the nobleman and the peasant as regards their social position. The nobility had obtained control of the entire administration machinery of government and thereby of the instrument of power, the police. It had been exempted from any kind of military service as there were now regular regiments with professional officers. And it had even obtained the absolute hereditary right to the land which ought in reality to be a reward for personal service. The peasant, on the other hand, was now body and soul, hide and hair, with wife and children in the power of the landlord, labored for his welfare, paid heavy taxes to the State, and was a thrall with no will of his own.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 453, - Platonov, *Učebnik*, p. 224.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 466-469, - Platonov, *Učebnik*, p. 223.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 516-24, - Platonov, *Učebnik*, p. 225.



The XVIIIth Century, notably the reigns of the Empress Elizabeth and the Empress Catherine II, saw the heyday of the aristocratic culture of luxury simultaneously with the culmination of serfdom. No law had ever legalized serfdom, and yet the entire social structure was based on it. Literally all roads to obtain relative independence had been blocked to the peasant. In 1726 he had lost his right to engage in a handicraft without his landlord's permission. In 1730 he had been forbidden to buy land for himself. In 1731 he had been deprived of his right to buy trade monopolies or enter upon an independent contract of delivery. In 1734 he had been divested of the right to start manufactories and industrial enterprises.<sup>32</sup> In all spheres of life, private as well as public, the landlord stood between him and the State as his supreme authority. He levied taxes on the peasant at his own discretion, he dominated his home life, separated him from wife and children, convicted him and exiled him to Siberia, bought, sold, and pawned him.<sup>33</sup> If this state of affairs was characteristic of the Empress Elizabeth's reign it was unfortunately no better under the wise, emancipated, and apparently so liberal Empress Catherine. Taken up with her rationalistic ideals she had dreamed in her youth of liberating the peasant from his thralldom and reinstalling him in his human dignity and rights. But she ended up, when an old Empress, by issuing a simple decree (1767) forbidding the peasant to launch complaints against his noble landlord or sue him in court.<sup>34</sup> Her reign became the culmination of the privileges of the nobility, the classic age of serfdom. State land with comparatively well situated state peasants was granted right and left on a grand scale to court favorites and private people, and the Ukraine, which had hitherto been free, owed to the Empress that serfdom was now instituted here too.<sup>35</sup>

No wonder then that the third peasant revolt broke out during her reign. The reason why the gifted Cossack chief, Emelian Pugačov, had such fantastic success at the outset when he raised the banner of rebellion was that the impoverished Russian peasants came in crowds to his hordes and were organized by him. At last the revolt rose to such colossal dimensions that whole armies had to be sent out against the rebels, and only Suvorov, the famous general who had to be called home from the Turkish front, succeeded in crushing Pugačov's Cossack and peasant rising.<sup>36</sup>

But the memory of Stenka Razin and Emelian Pugačov did not die among the peasants. The smoldering unrest still continued to flame up on the slightest occasion into serious rebellions. Particularly dangerous were the peasant disorders of 1797 comprising twelve provinces. Under the Emperor Alexander I serious revolts again broke out, particularly in the years 1818-20, and in the year of the

<sup>32</sup> Platonov, *Lekcii*, p. 541.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 557.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 604.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 605.

<sup>36</sup> *Istorija SSSR*, Vol. I, p. 695-702, - Platonov, *Učebnik*, p. 336-340.

Emperor's death. But under the reactionary Emperor Nicholas I the peasantry was simply seized with an epidemic of rebellions. Attempted murder, murder, incendiary fires, and assault were everyday occurrences. Slowly the Tsar regime began to realize that the peasant problem called for a solution. The Emperor Nicholas began to contemplate plans for the emancipation of the peasants from their insufferable serfdom, but he would not tolerate any outside agitation in favor of reforms, however vitally important. He kept it a secret from the people that discussions were carried on in various secret committees on definite projects for the gradual regulation of the conditions which made the peasant a miserable bondsman under the landlord's whip. But these committees could not come to an agreement or any acceptable result,<sup>37</sup> and so it was Nicholas's successor, Alexander II, who in 1861 issued the famous manifesto abolishing serfdom.<sup>38</sup>

The reason for this step was the simple fact that even the majority of the gentry realized that serfdom as a State institution did not pay any longer. Their program consisted of a personal and judicial emancipation of the peasant without any grant of land, but, fortunately, they did not succeed in carrying out their egoistic project. On the contrary, the landowner was pledged to give both farm and field to the peasant. In principle, however, the land on which the peasant was settled was recognized as the landlord's private property, and so the peasant was compelled to yield work or tax to the manor-house in return. It may therefore be said that the agrarian economic system which had been based on serfdom was not in fact essentially altered by the reform. Owing to his economic dependence from which it was extremely difficult for him to escape, the peasant was forced, now as before, to work several days a week on the landlord's estate.<sup>39</sup> In addition to this the allotment of land assigned to him was extremely small and his theoretical right of departure had in reality become very much limited and difficult to make use of. The emancipation of the peasant, which had been hailed with the greatest enthusiasm by Russian Liberalism, awakened nothing but suspicion and discontent among the peasants. The freedom they had yearned for was not at all this purely judicial freedom bestowed upon them, but true economic freedom.<sup>40</sup>

The capitalistic era which now ensued in Russia could only aggravate the position of the peasant. The penetration of capitalism into the sphere of agriculture caused a transition from the former medieval system of payment in kind to modern money economy.<sup>41</sup> The landowners to a great extent changed over to farming their own land instead of leasing it to the peasants, and the conditions on which the peasants could obtain new soil were considerably harder now than ever before. A commission appointed in 1901 to investigate the agrarian problem came to the conclusion that the land owned by the peasant generally represented only 20 per

<sup>37</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. II, p. 200-201.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the statistics of rebellions in Dubrowski, p. 37.

<sup>39</sup> Dubrowski, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Istorija SSSR.*, Vol. II, p. 400-424.

<sup>41</sup> Dubrowski, p. 16.

cent of his actual working capacity, that he reaped only 84 per cent of the grain and only 59 per cent of the oats he needed, and that his land area diminished with every year.

## 5.

One way out seemed open – migration to the rich and inexpensive soil of Siberia. And the peasants did not fail to make use of it. Exactly as under the old Muscovite Tsars the Russian peasants now fled and moved, with or without police passes, in an endless stream across the Ural Mountains. In the 1880s 60,000 peasants annually left their home land to found settlements in Siberia, and the figure rose continually until it reached 200,000 a year. But migration at this breathless pace combined with the low standard of the peasants' technical equipment soon led to the result that even Siberia's more easily accessible soil areas were exhausted, and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the annual return of up to half of the impoverished emigrants.<sup>42</sup>

The discontent smoldering in the peasantry, as fire under ashes, flamed up in the years 1905 and 1906 into one of the most violent and desperate peasant insurrections which Russia had ever seen. This, too, the government crushed by extremely harsh measures, including flogging of the rioting peasants, mass executions, and artillery fire against whole villages. It did, however, succeed in opening the eyes of the government to the fact that the old dangerous problem would now finally have to be solved fundamentally and effectively.<sup>43</sup> It must be admitted that the reform project which was now put into practice, mainly sponsored by the perspicacious statesman Stolypin, was actually a radical attempt at solving the old problem. It was Stolypin's aim to create a class of big farmers at the expense of the small-holders in order to convert in this way the Russian system of small-holdings into a system of comparatively large farms.<sup>44</sup>

New land must therefore be made available at all costs to the peasants who were capable of purchasing, and the State did actually launch an extensive sale policy. In the beginning state land was put on the market, but the actual aim was to have the small unprofitable gentry estates transferred to peasant hands. The gentry were more than willing to get rid of these small estates on guaranteed profitable conditions, as they were no longer able to hold their own against the large estates, managed according to capitalistic principles, with rationalized and intensive farming on a large scale. It was mainly the task of the newly founded Peasants' Land Bank to buy up gentry land, parcel it out, and sell it to capable peasants who were interested in purchase and had a reasonable credit. Statistics show that this policy was actually profitable and was crowned with success. 85 per cent of the estate land sold in 1906–16 did in fact end up as peasant property.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18–20.

In order to encourage further the desired social differentiation of the hitherto homogeneous peasantry the government resorted to another effective means. Up till now every peasant had *eo ipso* been a member of the peasant commune, the so-called *mir*, which was collectively responsible for the individual person's payment of taxes and owned the land collectively. Now that the individualization of agriculture seemed desirable, the government furnished the peasant with the right to buy himself out of this communal system, acquire new land, and round off his allotment in a practical way.<sup>46</sup> The result was that the big farmer, the so-called *kulak* (properly meaning 'fist') began to swallow up the small-holder, the so-called *bedn'ak* (properly 'poor man'). In this way grew up an increasing peasant proletariat without horse or cow, even without land and farm, by the side of a class of enterprising, clever, and wealthy peasants who were ready to take new land on lease and employed hired labor. The surplus mass of *bedn'aks* were intended to be absorbed in the rising town industry as factory workers. The desired class differentiation had been created.<sup>47</sup>

At the outbreak of World War I this state of affairs, however, was only just nascent.<sup>48</sup> It is difficult to say how the development would have continued if the great Revolution of 1917-18 had not taken place. One thing, however, is certain, namely that at the outbreak of the Revolution the Tsarist government, despite the expedient policy it had adopted, was still very far from its actual aim: that of making the big farmers contented adherents of the Tsarist regime. The peculiarly tough Russian peasant mentality made itself felt. No more than before did the peasant recognize the landlord's hereditary right to the land, and if he did buy land through the Peasant's Land Bank - which, incidentally, tended to safeguard the interests of the landlord seller rather than those of the peasant buyer - he did so, perfectly convinced that he was buying back land which properly belonged to himself.<sup>49</sup> And when the great chance came to revenge old wrongs, both *kulak* and *bedn'ak* agreed to combine their forces in turning out the landlords from their noble estates and patrimonies and taking possession of their land. In many cases the energetic and enterprising big farmers (the *kulaks*) were even the ones to lead the way and organize the spontaneous, revengeful, and greedy peasant revolution and to secure for themselves the best parts of the spoil.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. S. and B. Webb, *Soviet Communism. A new Civilization*, London 1944, p. 440: "The Russian peasant, whether poor or well-to-do, had never relinquished the conviction that the land which he cultivated, or from which he had been evicted, was rightfully his own property ...".

## Chapter 8.

# MENTAL STRUCTURE

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### 1.

In the preceding chapter the history of the Russian peasant was traced up to the October Revolution. This history must have left its marks on the structure of Russian mentality. The October Revolution, which completely changed the living conditions of the Russian people and consequently also those of the Russian peasantry, must have had a corresponding influence on its mentality, modified and changed it. The question is whether we can draw a picture of the pre-Revolutionary mentality and show in what way the Revolution has affected it.

We have in the preceding chapters considered it legitimate to emphasize mainly the description of the spiritual life of the Russian peasant, his relation to Paganism and Christianity, his poetry. We have done so from the consideration that throughout centuries the majority of the Russian people was a peasant population, and that the spheres of spiritual, religious, and poetic activity in which we have been moving had of necessity assumed a definitely agrarian character. It has tacitly been assumed that the remaining classes and groups of the population which might have been dealt with were less representative of the nation as a whole. Such a procedure seems justified in a work of this type. It will be adopted in the present chapter, too. But that involves our basing the following description on the presumption that Russian peasant mentality and the so-called Russian national psyche are not identical, which must be the more correct as the former concept may be founded on social, i.e. sociologically definable data, but the latter on nothing but speculation and generalization.

In scientific, and especially in pseudo-scientific, literature on this subject numerous attempts have been made to give a psychological characterization of

the Russian people, just as similar attempts have frequently been made to portray the psychology of other nations. But unfortunately there is no method extant which might be said to be generally recognized or to have produced generally recognized results.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand there are methods which meet with the most violent opposition because they tend to draw conclusions from seemingly acceptable premises, conclusions which nevertheless cannot possibly be correct. Such a method is for instance the modern *anthropological-psychological* one which certainly has produced important results so long as it confined itself to primitive civilizations, but gave rise to an entirely justifiable opposition when it tackled a subject as complex as that of determining the Russian national psyche. This method, as will be known, implies the determination and explanation of a nation's psychology on the assumption that impressions and experiences received by the child during the first years of its life exert a fundamental influence on the human psyche, decisive for the course of later life, and that the psychology of a whole nation has its roots in the uniform impressions and experiences received by the mass of its children during these early years. From these basic principles an American writer, the well-known adherent of the *pattern school*, Geoffroy Gorer, has tried to explain certain traits which to his mind seem staple and typically Russian, on the basis of "the peasant practice of swaddling infants up to about the age of nine months."<sup>2</sup>

The presumably typical Russian traits which according to this theory may be explained from the "practice" mentioned are: (1) "inclination to resort to violence", (2) "inclination to indulge in conspiracies", (3) "a continuous demand for confessions", (4) "the fear of an enemy but no certainty as to his identity", (5) "renunciation of immediate pleasures to achieve authority", (6) "the inadmissibility of compromise", and (7) "the search for an all-embracing Truth".<sup>3</sup> The fact that the Russian peasant infant was now "swaddled" and deprived of any "gratification", now "unswaddled" and "fed, petted, and looked after", this "alternation of restraint without gratifications and complete gratifications without restraint",<sup>4</sup> is supposed to explain not only the Russian contempt of physical gratification, alternating with its predilection for "orgiastic feasts, prolonged drinking bouts, high frequency of copulation, and so on",<sup>5</sup> but also the Russian's "feeling (in large part unconscious) of pervasive though unfocussed guilt, which can make some Russians feel responsible for the sins and miseries of the whole world, and which gives a general and continuous demand for either confession, atonement, or revenge,"<sup>6</sup> and even "the use of cannibalistic figures of speech in current and recent Soviet propaganda."<sup>7</sup> The traits stated to be typically Russian

<sup>1</sup> Eysenck, p. 243 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Gorer, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Goldman, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Gorer, p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 160.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

have been obtained through so-called "interviewing techniques of field anthropology",<sup>8</sup> but they do not give the impression of having been in any way statistically verified. On the contrary they provoke the greatest distrust and misgivings in anyone who knows the Russian people, especially the peasantry, from personal experience.<sup>9</sup>

Much preferable is another method which is not based on speculation, as the previous one, but on an empirical foundation, and which perhaps deserves to be called the *socio-psychological* method. It aims at "an investigation of fundamental attitudes and values, characteristic of a homogeneous society, or within a heterogeneous society, of occupational, social class, regional and ideological groups".<sup>10</sup> "It sees attitude and value systems arising out of the continuous experiences of people with such problems as subsistence, technology, property relations, family relations, systems of law and government, religious practices and beliefs and so on. These attitudes and values interact with and change with alterations in the conditions of life."<sup>11</sup> In order to provide this method with the necessary scientific ballast Goldman, the author of the above-mentioned statements, rightly demands the fulfilment of a large number of preliminary conditions, namely (1) "establishment of reasonably objective criteria for descriptive statements", (2) "determination of statistical frequencies of behavior patterns to typicalness", (3) "indication of situational contexts of behavior", and finally (4) "the extent of uniqueness of such behavior to the culture studied."<sup>12</sup>

It is, however, self-evident that such conditions can hardly be fulfilled outside Russia, and that a foreigner is excluded from giving his description the necessary sound scientific foundation. In the literature on Russia are found dozens of more or less exhaustive descriptions of the Russian national psyche, which all agree in being deficient as to the above-mentioned preliminary conditions. Nevertheless they may occasionally be so convincing that you accept them on the strength of the psychological insight of the observer and describer. Such a description we find in a book written by the French geographer Georges Jorré. His basic idea is that the Russian national psychology, mainly applying to the psychology of the Russian peasantry taken as a whole and comprising the Russians, Byelorussian and Ukrainians, is characterized by "contrasts, if not indeed contradictions".<sup>13</sup> He finds in Russian mentality the co-existence of such opposite features as (1) "a dreaming melancholy" and "a cheerful temperament", (2) "great goodness, infinite compassion with suffering and sin" and "an astonishing capacity for cruelty",

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> The present writer spent his childhood and early youth in Russia in close contact with the Russian peasantry. He even knows that he himself, though not belonging to the peasantry, was "swaddled" for at least the first months of his life without its resulting in any of the traits ascribed to this practice.

<sup>10</sup> Goldman, p. 154.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> George Jorré, p. 94.

(3) "almost naive loyalty" and "extremely pronounced tendencies towards mendacity", (4) "touching generosity" and "uncontrolled egoism", (5) "humility bordering on a propensity to self-accusation" and "an enormous contempt of others", and (6) "a rare capacity for work" and "depressing apathy". The author is not blind to the fact that the particular destiny of the Russian peasant throughout history, namely that of "serfdom", has contributed greatly to falsifying the character of the Russian people. But in spite of the negative features enumerated by the author he is full of admiration for the Russian national psyche: "Quelles ressources d'intelligence et de courage! et quelle vitalité!"<sup>14</sup>

A few years after the present writer had left Russia (1915) he sought to record his impression of Russian mentality such as he had known it through more than 20 years<sup>15</sup> and likewise stressed the contradictory aspect of the Russian (peasant) nation's psychology. "The Russian people is a people of extreme contradictions, a people combining appetite for life with disgust of life, urge for heroic action with self-abandonment, vigor with apathy." After having described the supposedly "positive" qualities of the Russian people, such as "force" ("an unreflecting force", "a force, which sweeps into the world without any purpose"), or "audacity" ("an audacity which does not shun the most apparent dangers", and which can "spur it on to heroic deeds almost surpassing human comprehension by their recklessness"), or "enthusiasm" ("an enthusiasm which knows neither hesitation nor doubt and leads to conflict and war"), or "urge for heroic action" ("an urge to make possible the impossible", "an irrational desire for turning the entire universe upside down"), the writer goes on to mention the directly opposite qualities of a "negative" character, such as "passivity", "paralyzed energy", "fatalism", "timidity", "indifference", "weakness of character", etc.<sup>16</sup> However superficially one regards these negative traits it is obvious that they do not affect the intellectual or emotional spheres but only the volitional sphere. The co-existence of opposite traits within the first two spheres is not in the least exclusively characteristic of Russian mentality, as the transition from one extreme to the other is a universal human characteristic depending on the changing situation. But the co-existence of opposite traits in the volitional sphere is not an accidental occurrence, but inherent in, and characteristic of, Russian mentality. The reason why Russian mentality spans the opposite poles of the volitional sphere simultaneously should be sought in the fate of history which has compelled the Russian people to doubt its own natural vigor and indulge in inertia. The state of serf-like dependency, which during centuries of serfdom had bound him to his master, the landlord, provides the simple explanation of the typical serf-like traits which developed in his psyche, tying down, as with fetters, his free initiative and natural enterprise.

This purely historical circumstance also explains a number of features, which

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup> See the Danish written article "Tolstoj's omvendelse og den russiske folkesjæl", *Tilskueren*, Copenhagen 1917, p. 149-63.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 161.



are on no account constant, or national, traits but the results of an insufferable oppression. Above all we should ascribe to it the pre-Revolutionary peasant's suspicion of any authority felt to be hostile, his distrust of superior classes which he identified with the ruling class, his mendacity which was a necessary weapon in a struggle for existence in which he was the weaker part, his cruelty when at length a chance offered itself for revenge and riot. His low cultural level, the result of centuries of neglect on the part of the responsible authorities, was one of the factors which had a very negative effect on his attitude towards his surroundings, and bears the blame for his lacking a number of restraining qualities implanted in the upper classes through education, tradition, and schools. It is extremely doubtful whether there is any justification for attributing to him any feeling of guilt, as his fate had only enabled him to feel innocently oppressed and abused. This very lack of "bad conscience" was the reason why he regarded any culprit as his potential equal and as a rebel against the common enemy. The feeling of guilt was much rather a characteristic of the intellectual, who came from the class of great landowners and felt responsible for the heavy lot of the Russian peasant. The wide scope of mind, which is often called by the Russian term *širokaja natura* and is regarded as a typical national characteristic, was by no means typical of the peasant but far more of the upper-class Russian who had grown up in the environment of hospitable manor-houses. And when in his reflections on the Russian people Dostojevskij ascribed to it as a whole such traits as human understanding and open-mindedness to all values, he was attributing the broad education found in the cultured Russian intellectual to a peasant, who in reality could see no farther than the narrow range of his miserable little existence. Generosity was either a characteristic of the typical Russian average nobleman or, when found in the peasant, identical with that lack of calculation, characteristic of him who owns nothing and therefore freely shares his poverty with his neighbor or a stranger.

This characterization would, however, be another falsifying statement if we do not take into consideration the differentiation which the peasantry had begun to experience, especially following upon the Stolypin land reform. For the social distinctions which had begun to make themselves felt in the rural districts also contributed to a psychological differentiation between various strata of the peasantry, and the mentality of a *kulak* was diametrically opposite to that of a *bedn'ak* ('poor peasant'), whereas the *seredn'ak* ('middle peasant'), in the psychological sense as well, was oscillating between these extreme poles. The *kulak* was a type beginning to rise above the general economic level of the peasants and to assume psychological features which may be explained partly by the economic security he was acquiring, partly by his position which was comparable to that of the *nouveau riche* within the bourgeoisie. He was intelligent, provident, energetic, skilful, and clever and was distinguished by all extrinsic traits of respectability. But he had lost the better moral characteristics of the peasantry without having acquired the better features of the class he was approaching. According to Webb

this type was "a terrible oppressor of his poorer neighbors".<sup>17</sup> Various competent pre-Revolutionary observers, quoted by Webb, seem to agree in describing this social type as endowed with the most unsympathetic traits. One of them<sup>18</sup> maintains that "the distinctive characteristic of this class is the hard unflinching cruelty of a thoroughly uneducated man who has made his way from poverty to wealth, and has come to consider money-making by whatever means as the only pursuit to which a rational being should devote himself." And another observer<sup>19</sup> says that "of all the human monsters he has ever met in his travels, he cannot recall any so malignant and odious as the Russian *kulak*." That is why the *kulaks* were soon singled out as a *class enemy* who must be fought.

## 2.

The October Revolution, owing to its historical course, must of necessity interfere with rural conditions. The February Revolution had by no means solved the urgent agrarian problem, though it was accompanied by a fairly violent and bloody peasant insurrection. This insurrection was in so far successful, as the landlord had been crushed and expelled. But the development of the succeeding years when the spoil was to be shared was completely devoid of any rational character. As a class the peasants were in need of a brilliant leader or a really effective agrarian party, which could reduce their wishes to a system. The Socialist Revolutionary party, which considered itself a peasant party, had failed to perform its task and had split up in two groups, one of which (the radical wing) soon joined forces with the Bolshevik Party.<sup>20</sup>

The reduction and expropriation which the estates underwent during the Revolution were in reality of little consequence where the peasant's provision of land was concerned. Post-Revolutionary agriculture also continued (at first) to be based in principle on the unproductive and unprofitable system of small-holdings with a few hectares belonging to each peasant farm, and the social revolution, which had swept the cities under the slogan of the *Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, changed nothing in the country. On the contrary, when the so-called *New Economic Policy* was proclaimed by Lenin in 1921 it gave rise to a remarkable capitalistic development in the rural districts owing to the liberties and chances with which it provided the peasant.<sup>21</sup> The extraordinary thing even happened that the Stolypin reform, believed to have been buried with Tsarism, flourished in the country and bore fruit. The social differentiation of the peasantry progressed rapidly. At the re-distribution of land in 1918 it had been seen to that the *kulaks* were deprived of any quantity of land exceeding a certain maximum, but they had managed to save

<sup>17</sup> Webb, p. 465.

<sup>18</sup> Stepniak, p. 35

<sup>19</sup> Dillon, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> Dubrowski, p. 168ff.

<sup>21</sup> Webb, p. 451, 453.

and preserve their live and dead stock, and so recovered more easily under the *New Economic Policy* system than their less well-equipped neighbors, the *seredn'aks*, and especially the *bedn'aks*. The influence of the *kulaks* among the other peasant classes increased with alarming rapidity, though they only numbered between one and two millions. Small-holdings passed into *kulak* ownership, and the percentage of impoverished farm laborers without land and farm rose almost precipitously.

This uncontrolled and elementary process was utterly disproportionate to the socialization carried out consistently in the towns by the Bolshevik Party and the government, and as soon as external and internal conditions would permit, the Party and the government were expected to turn against the antirevolutionary, agrarian capitalistic danger in the country. The discussions taking place within the Party on this issue were violent.<sup>22</sup> To quote Webb, "we need only recall how, unlike the procedure of a dictatorship, the intellectual wrestling with the problem lasted for a couple of years; how it took the form of a long drawn struggle in endless meetings and debates, rival pamphleteering and newspaper controversy; how it produced the most acute cleavage in the ranks of the Communist Party that had occurred in all its decade of governmental experience; and how, at last, after interminable parleyings in committee among the warring factions, a decision was arrived at, against which a minority intrigued and rebelled in such a way and to such an extent as to lead at last to the expulsion and exile of some of the most prominent personalities among the *Old Revolutionaries*."<sup>23</sup>

It was apparently no imaginary danger painted on the wall to divert the attention of a discontented town population from other affairs. The danger was expressed in an increasing individualization of agriculture, and the big farmer's growing influence in the village soviets and at soviet elections. Moreover, the peasants were prompted by the *kulaks* to refuse in large numbers to sell their surplus of grain to the Soviet Government. There were even serious local peasant disorders and terrorist activity in the rural parts. But in 1927 the Soviet Government proclaimed economic war against the *kulak*, *the liquidation of the kulaks as a class*.<sup>24</sup>

At first it found expression in a series of political, taxation, and legislative measures restricting the capitalistic freedom and influence of the *kulak*. But soon it was realized that the reduction of the *kulak* to a state of political nonage was not enough for an effectual solution of the agrarian problem. A fixed and comprehensive social program would have to be laid down as the foundation for the Soviet Government's agrarian policy. This was done at the XVth Congress of the Communist Party on December 2, 1927, when after having described the disastrous condition of production in the country, and the social political danger threatening from the peasantry, Stalin demanded the adoption of a grandiose

<sup>22</sup> See G. Zinov'jev, *Naši raznoglasija*, Moscow-Leningrad 1926, and N. Buxarin, *Tri reči*, Moscow-Leningrad 1926.

<sup>23</sup> Webb, p. 464.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 463. — Cf. H. A. Freund, *Russia from A to Z*, Sydney-London 1945, pp. 113-116.

plan of collectivization, in reality a revolution in itself, a second agrarian revolution, even greater in magnitude than that of 1917-1918.<sup>25</sup> The idea of the plan was to switch over from the small and scattered peasant holdings to large collective farms which were to be operated on the basis of a new and higher technique. These collective farms were to be run on social collective lines, including the use of farming machinery and tractors and according to scientific agricultural methods.

Basically, it can be said that the goal now fixed was in principle identical with the one laid down by Stolypin as the aim of his reform, with the only but very important difference that what Stolypin had expected to obtain through measures of a purely financial nature was now to be achieved by means of technical political plans. Instead of a system based on a few large and economically profitable individual estates at the head of a host of small and dwarf-sized holdings, enormous agrarian concerns were to be established on the lines of rationalized and modernized farming methods, huge estates to be run on co-operative lines. Besides the model state farms, the so-called *sovkhoses*, already in existence, were now founded the so-called *kolkhoses*. On these not only the crops, grain, milk, eggs, pigs, and cattle were joint property, but the process of production itself, the cultivating of the soil, the raising of cattle etc. was based on the joint efforts of the partners. In reality this new system rested on the assumption that all land belonged to the State, a principle which had incidentally already been laid down by a decree of November 18, 1917, but was only now brought into effect in its entirety. In a way there was thus a reversion to the principle which already Tsar Ivan the Terrible had attempted to enforce by proclaiming that all Russian soil belonged to him personally in his capacity of Tsar.<sup>26</sup> In return the State guaranteed the *kolkhoses* the use of the land *in all eternity*.

The collectivization plan met with the deepest distrust among the peasants. The inherent distrust of the authorities now manifested itself to its full extent. The Revolution had changed nothing in peasant psychology. The freeholder mentality, evolved through centuries, the sluggish primitive individualism tying the peasant to his farm and land, rose in violent opposition against a plan which seemingly implied depriving the peasant of his hard-earned property and turning him into a part in an agrarian machine. The peasant feared a new form of the old hated serfdom, a new form of villenage and land-tie. It was not only the *kulak* who took up a hostile attitude towards the project. The *seredn'ak*, too, was definitely against it to begin with, and the *kulak* made full use of his influence and authority against its realization. But the government and the press employed every possible measure to break down the opposition. They availed themselves of the press, the radio, propaganda, lectures, and films. Where peaceful means failed they resorted to imprisonment, punishment, and deportation. The fight against the *kulaks* as a class grew increasingly ruthless, and by slow degrees the whole system of produc-

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 464.

<sup>26</sup> See above, p. 81.

tion was recast. There is no doubt that forcible means were employed to such a degree that even the central authorities were alarmed. Only 20 per cent of the peasants had been expected to join in collectivization, but actually 55 per cent joined during the very first years. This unexpected speed could not have been obtained but by encroachment and coercive means. When Stalin made his famous speech in which he told the people that this was not the idea at all, and that the pace ought to be slackened and voluntariness restored, the number of *kolkhoz* members was suddenly halved.<sup>27</sup> But after the initial difficulties had been overcome, collectivization proceeded at a normal, though even now increasing, rate. Whereas in 1928 there were approximately 33,000 *kolkhozes*, the number had grown to 242,000 in 1938. Even more illustrative are the figures giving the extension of collectivized farms: whereas in 1933 the percentage of united farms was 65 per cent it was 93,5 per cent in 1938. The last figure corresponded to 99,3 per cent of the entire sown area.

## 3.

The effect of this development on the mental attitude of the peasant and the change in this attitude become clear when we consider that collectivization so completely altered the basis of his existence that he lost some of the most fundamental peasant qualities and acquired certain features of the industrial worker's psyche. For collectivization meant the mechanization of his work. It has often been maintained, and rightly, that the collectivization of Russian agriculture owes its ultimate success to the tractor. From the very outset the government realized that the fusion of almost all farm holdings in large units was a reasonable and rational procedure only on the precondition that the peasantry were provided with mechanized and industrialized means and methods of production. A network of motor and tractor stations, the so-called *M.T.S. points*, was set up, thus making machinery for mass cultivation available to the established collectives on extremely favorable conditions. These stations or points became of extreme importance as means of communicating agricultural methods, even as vehicles of a completely new civilization in rural Russia. Their significance can only be compared to the role played by the monasteries and princely estates in the early Middle Ages in adopting new horticultural and agricultural methods. Russian agriculture began to be mechanized, industrialized, and electrified. Interest in mechanics and in mathematical and statistic calculation was awakened among the younger generation in the countryside. The peasant's ancient fatalistic or animistic belief in the blind and invincible forces of nature was doomed to be overcome, as were his prejudices and superstitions, his pagan and Christian doctrines. A thousand different slogans, launched to spur on the fulfilment of the *Five Year Plan*, roused the peasant from his inertia. Such concepts as responsibility and discipline were applied to agriculture. Record outputs were rewarded in agriculture as well as in industry. Slackness and sloth were publicly branded. So-called *socialist compe-*

<sup>27</sup> Webb, p. 467. — Cf. the figures in Freund, p. 114–116.

titions and contest between different productive units were utilized to stimulate the rate of production. *Shock brigades* of elite workers or *Komsomol* youths were sent to the endangered agricultural *fronts*. Educational institutes, cinemas, and theatres were erected, and dramatic societies and choirs were founded in connection with various collectives.

Although the new psychology, which seems to have evolved among the collective peasants, has a distinctly uniform character, presenting an undiversified appearance of attitudes and reactions, not unlike the spirit of soldiers under military command, it can hardly be said to be in all respects what is understood by a collective psychology, nor can it be said that all individualism has been exterminated. We must be very careful not to become guilty of superficiality and shallow generalization. Thinking, particularly on social and national issues, not along national lines but in terms of *stereotypes*, it must be repeated, is dangerous.<sup>28</sup> It may sound like a paradox, but seems none the less to be the truth that the Russian peasant mentality is in some respects more highly differentiated after the collectivization than it was before the Revolution. Whereas earlier the homogeneous and drab peasant mass used to think and speak predominantly in the 1st person plural, they now seem to consist of individuals, each with a distinct consciousness of his own *ego*. This is not solely due to the sense of responsibility acquired by the individual in connection with the individual tasks allocated to him by the collective, but is quite obviously associated with a purely economic factor of extreme significance. For the share of the individual *kolkhoz* member in the joint profit is computed in strict accordance with his own contributions towards it, or with the day's work or *trudoden* he has put into it. The contribution varies a great deal according to individual qualifications or special techniques, and so a kind of piece-work system has been introduced here as well as in industry. This may occasionally involve considerable differences in earnings, especially as first-class work is rewarded progressively, whereas inferior work is punished progressively. It may therefore be maintained that the Russian system is developing towards a combination of collectivized large-scale farming with a series of personal advantages through which individual achievement is encouraged. When it is further added that the individual *kolkhoz* farmer is entitled to cultivate in his leisure time his own little plot of private land, his own garden, raise his own poultry, and so on, and sell his private produce in the free market, it will be understood that a certain scope has been secured for private initiative, which is not without importance in the development of a new psyche.

This picture, which is based on unbiased information and literary sources, should probably be supplemented with certain features characteristic of Soviet life in general in the Stalin era. They, too, will prove most important in the evaluation of the new peasant mentality emerging in Soviet Russia. Even if the individual peasant as a member of his *kolkhoz* became part of the administrative apparatus controlling each collective farm, he, too, – like every other Soviet citizen – lived under continuous direction from above. The enormous centrali-

<sup>28</sup> Eysenck, p. 243.

zation, which was effectuated throughout the Soviet Union also comprised the agrarian sector. The collective idea in the rigorous form given it in the Soviet Union will, according to Communist ways of thought, only be completely practicable in a Communist society which alone can offer the external conditions for a really consistent socialist collective mentality. At the semi-communistic stage, at which the development seems to have stopped for the time being, the individual may quite often feel compelled to think of himself and his family first, and the collective idea may frequently clash with individualistic tendencies, wishes, dreams, and endeavors sprung from practical everyday life. The enthusiasm for work and sacrifice, so continually appealed to, must for the same reason have taken a high toll, at certain times grievously high, of the individual person's working capacity and nervous energy, which has led to serious cases of mental collapse, suicide, etc. The continuous strain of public duties and the never-ending pressure on the individual sense of responsibility have in many cases, recorded in literature, called forth outbursts of despair revealing an unsatisfied thirst for a little spontaneous joy of life, a little spell of irresponsible and childlike play. Exactly like the town-dweller and workman, the Russian peasant was, in the Stalin era, undoubtedly put through a hard school. Despite repeated demands for a slow-down of the pace, an alleviation of the burden, and a slackening of collective discipline, and despite the repeated introduction of measures to this effect, as festivities, theatrical performances, dances, choir singing, cinema shows, and premiums for special achievements, the point does not yet seem to have been reached when completely voluntary work, undertaken in a spirit of responsibility, may replace compulsion and pressure from the leaders.

At all events it seems certain that a significant change has taken place in the Russian peasant mentality. The Russian peasant of to-day cannot be compared with, much less classed with, the dirty, bearded, undernourished, alcoholized, and brutalized *bedn'ak* of the time before the Revolution and collectivization; and the big, cunning, ruthless, and grasping *kulak* has disappeared. They have been superseded by cleanshaven, rationalistically minded agriculturalists, who are familiar with every aspect of technical and mechanical skill, who are psychologically as well as economically differentiated to a comparatively high degree, and whose range of interest covers the large collective farm they work on and through that the entire country. The feeling of being a helpless slave of nature has been replaced by a modern attitude to nature as an object of human work. Work itself has been made a conscious achievement, and modern agrarian methods are no longer met with distrust or superstition. In fact, there may be a possibility of a complete coincidence of peasant psychology and factory-worker mentality.<sup>28</sup>

We are witnessing a socio-psychological metamorphosis which is by no means finished, which rather is only at its beginning.

<sup>28</sup> The views formulated above, which must be said to be subjective impressions rather than established facts, are based on observations which the present writer made during his stay in the Soviet Union in 1926, 1937, 1946 and 1956, and which he partly has had the opportunity of publishing in his Danish writings *Russia in the melting pot*, Copenhagen 1934, *Nations and peoples in Soviet Russia*, Copenhagen 1939 and *Soviet Union after Stalin*, Copenhagen 1955.







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